

Atmabrittanta

LATE LIFE RECOLLECTIONS

Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala

(1914-1982)

Translated by
Kanak Mani Dixit

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Publisher's note:

B.P. Koirala's *Atmabrittanta* was first published in Nepali in 1998, soon after the publication (also in Nepali) of his *Jail Journal*. Both books were published by the Lalitpur-based Jagadamba Prakashan. This English translation of *Atmabrittanta* brought out by Himal Books is accompanied by Jagadamba Prakashan's Hindi translation of *Jail Journal*. The work to bring B.P. Koirala's writings to readerships beyond his native Nepali language has received the support of the B.P. Koirala India-Nepal Foundation. Next, the publishers plan to bring out *Jail Journal* in English, and *Atmabrittanta* in Hindi.

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PO Box 166, Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur, Nepal

Tel: +977-1-542544 • Fax: +977-1-541196

himassn@mos.com.np

www.himalassociation.org/himalbooks

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Translator's note

The time it took to translate Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala's *Atmabrittanta* allowed me the opportunity to be continuously reminded of the extent to which he has been disregarded in modern-day Nepal and the world. And how much of a loss this has been to both, not to know that a man of such stature walked these hills and plains. For Nepal, as a country that has for too long scraped the bottom of the barrel for worthy leadership, it takes the breath away to consider B.P. Koirala—writer, thinker, statesman and humanitarian.

'BP' fought for Indian independence shoulder-to-shoulder with the greats of India, and was a player in many contemporary historical events south of the border. Jawaharlal Nehru survived and led India for 17 years after its independence. Fate would not extend a similar privilege to B.P. Koirala, and even as his co-equals settled down to enjoy the fruits of post-colonial India, BP's fight for his people was just beginning. Ahead lay years more of imprisonment and in exile.

BP's life crusade for political freedom and the socio-economic advance of his country disappeared from view after King Mahendra took control with the royal putsch of 1960. With the West preferring to view Nepal touristically as a newly-discovered mountain kingdom, BP's political agenda attracted little interest other than from the rather hapless individuals of the interational socialist movement (as portrayed by BP himself in these pages). While many of his old Indian comrades remained steadfastly loyal, others began to view Nepal through the prism of geo-strategic calculation, particularly after the 1962 war with China. For sure, this explains the public distancing of Jawaharlal Nehru as prime minister from BP.

Hopefully, this English translation of his own story will herald a revival of international interest in B.P. Koirala, as well as supplement works such as those of three decades ago by the scholar Bhola Chatterji (*see additional readings*).

Within Nepal, BP remains strangely mis-perceived as the 'intellectual property' of the Nepali Congress party, which unnecessarily dilutes his legacy. The Congress party's understandable alacrity to act as custodian of BP's heritage, particularly since democracy was restored in 1990, has confined BP whereas he should mean so much more to the larger public. Out of strategic necessity, the Nepali Left has shunned BP's contributions, even though his politics took after both Gandhi and Marx. ("I began with

Gandhi, had an interlude with Marx, and returned to Gandhi," he told Bhola Chatterji.)

The personality of BP has been restricted to a wholly inadequate ideological pigeonhole. The country loses out in the tight embrace of B.P. Koirala by the Nepali Congress, the willing disregard by the Left, and his neglect by Nepal's social scientists. For his strongly-held beliefs still hold the power to chart a course for Nepal's social and economic advance. But then the abandonment of B.P. Koirala had its precursor in the Panchayat period propaganda, when all who challenged the king's right to rule and reign were tarred as *arastriya-tatwa*, or 'anti-national elements'.

The absence of a commanding yet non-authoritarian personality is conspicuous today in a country that has democracy without leadership. Fortunately, BP's legacy has a staying power that prejudiced politics and lack of academic commitment will not diminish, and his writings and convictions as a politician, social critic and litterateur will surely serve their purpose as Nepalis confront an increasingly complex world defined by market penetration, trial democracy and loss of tradition. A non-partisan consideration of BP's writings would perhaps be the place to start.

Atmabrittanta contains a rich trove of material from one of two principal actors in Nepal's transition to the modern era (King Mahendra was the other one). Such is the flow of B.P. Koirala's unedited memoirs that even the uninitiated reader will be carried along as the narrative proceeds from the closing Rana years through periods of imprisonment and exile, to end in the reign of King Birendra. I am sure that these pages will whet the appetite of readers to reach further into the history of modern-day Nepali politics.

It is interesting that BP's exile was mostly spent across the open border in the neighbouring regions of Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the two areas critical to Nepal's own progress or stagnation. It would have been so easy for him to have been a properly fashionable freedom fighter, the toast of the world capitals, but he chose to stay close to Nepal. He could also have spent his exile in Calcutta's pleasure dome, Delhi's increasingly powerful vortex, or Bangalore, where so many Nepali rulers went into comfortable banishment. BP's dedicated stay in the Ganga plain should serve as a reminder to Kathmandu's insular intelligentsia of the need to understand the immediate neighbourhood better.

Moments of exhilaration and tragedy fill these pages, with episodes of tantalising detail and a roll call of anecdotes. But in the end what remains is triumph of the spirit over mediocrity, malfeasance, sickness and even

ultimate death. On a personal level, BP's observation that truth extracts a price but is still the only way to live should inspire the 'here and now' generation—within and beyond Nepal's borders—to look into itself a little more critically. To that extent, B.P. Koirala was much more than a Nepali statesman, his life's work holds a candle for all of South Asia.

The reader will have to bear in mind that this unique autobiography is as spoken into a microphone, with BP having had no opportunity to edit, correct or revise—he was gone before he could do that. As a straight-through tape-recorded transcript, there are a handful of places where the narration moves back and forth, or where there may seem some repetition or inconsistency. The rare moment when something was unclear in the original Nepali, it is left so in the translation. But it is amazing how even in his weakened cancer-ridden state, BP carried through these Recollections with the flair and pace of the master story-teller he was.

There remains an urgent need to investigate the whereabouts of what we may call the 'BP Papers', the mass of transcripts, diaries, speeches, articles and other writings that BP left behind, of which but a fraction have surfaced. Whether they have been irrevocably lost or are being held back by individuals for whatever reason, the public needs to know the fate of the BP Papers. Researchers who commit themselves to the task will not be disappointed.

As translator, I was given the opportunity to rediscover B.P. Koirala. For allowing me this privilege, I have to thank the well-known constitutional lawyer Ganesh Raj Sharma, who taped and transcribed these Recollections as his personal mission; as well as my father Kamal Mani Dixit, of Jagadamba Prakashan in Lalitpur, who brought out the original publication in Nepali.

I am obliged to the following for having taken the time to read the text of *Atmabrittanta* before publication: Miriam Poser, Himali Dixit, Perry Keil Thapa, Shanta Dixit and C.K. Lal. The scholar Krishna Hachhethu helped with the list of additional readings, and Deepak Thapa, editor at Himal Books, provided me invaluable support.

The publication of *Atmabrittanta* in English, I am confident, will give readers an additional reason to get to know the people of Nepal, who B.P. Koirala strove to serve till his very last breath as he spoke the words in these pages.

25 March 2001

Kanak Mani Dixit
Patan Dhoka, Kathmandu Valley

Foreword to the Nepali edition

These Recollections of the late Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala were not written by him but rather narrated into a microphone, after he learnt that he did not have much time left to live. Cancer had finally invaded his lungs, and once he was convinced that even the very best treatment would do nothing more than delay departure by a bit BP decided to use the few days remaining to communicate with the people.

On 26 October 1981, Dr Sundar Mani Dixit had diagnosed the small and painless nodules which had appeared in BP's throat as indication of the rapidly spreading cancer. When he learnt that he could be dead within six months, BP came with Shiva Dhvaj Basnet straight to my residence, where Daman Nath Dhungana, Radheshyam Adhikari and I were deliberating some philosophical matter. He joined our discussion for a while, and then took me to an adjoining room and told me what the doctor had said. BP then rejoined the group and enthusiastically talked for about an hour about divinity, religion and human behaviour. Here was the best example of BP's attitude to life: he did not seem more worried than if the doctor had identified some common ailment. The others did not even know that he had come straight from hearing what was essentially a death sentence.

Over the next eight months, speaking practically from his deathbed, Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala spoke into a tape-recorder and shared a great deal of his thoughts. I made those tape recordings, and I now present them before the public in text form.

To recount the circumstances under which BP spoke into the microphone: the doctors had already started chemotherapy, which made him nauseous, breathless and weak. In all, he underwent four chemotherapy sessions at the Tata Memorial Hospital in Bombay. As the distressing countdown continued, he would describe his experience in Bombay without trace of bitterness, such as when recalling the names of patients who had passed away since his last visit. After the fourth session in Bombay, the doctors said that he did not have to receive another chemotherapy dose for a while, and he even expressed doubts about whether he actually had cancer. Before the chemotherapy dose was administered, BP would be cheerful and smiling, but afterwards one would find him lying listlessly in bed. The following day, he would be unable even to raise his head from the pillow, but the smile never left his face. During moments of unbearable distress, he would share the

thought that even enemies should not have to suffer a treatment such as chemotherapy. The doctors insisted that BP must increase his food intake to raise the haemoglobin level, but he started eating less and less. His hair was falling off.

Access to the sick room was strictly restricted, for BP was susceptible to infection. Fortunately, for the entire eight months that followed, I did not suffer even from common cold. I was therefore able to visit him every morning, and, among other things, witness his ability to confront pain through the power of will that he retained till the ultimate end. It was on the basis of that willpower that BP was able to speak, for the sake of the Nepali people and humanity at large, these words from his deathbed.

These Recollections were not recorded in question-answer format. That would have taken too long and also disturbed the flow of BP's retrospection. I asked BP to speak uninterruptedly, as much as his memory allowed, about the significant events of his eventful life. I told him that my intention was to transcribe the tapes and publish the Recollections unexpurgated. It was a new experience for him as well, speaking before two listeners (Shailaja Acharya and myself) in a room with the doors closed. BP kept to the recording schedule with a sense of commitment, as much as time and his energy allowed. At the end of the entire taping, it was my plan to go back over the material and seek clarification and additions from BP, but he was unable to complete even what he had to say. I thus could not complete this assignment in full.

Occasionally, the tape-recorder would not be available when BP started talking about history, politics and philosophy; that would be most distressing. For example, when he recalled his meeting with former Rana prime minister, Juddha Shumshere, in Dehra Dun. Unlike the other Ranas, Juddha Shumshere had left a definite impression on BP with his clear and bold utterances. Juddha Shumshere had listed the seven 'dos and don'ts' for doing politics in Nepal, and BP remembered them all. That meeting is not part of this record. Similarly, while BP recounts the circumstances under which he left for India after eight years in Sundarijal Jail, he was not able to describe the following eight years of life and politics in exile. Perhaps he did not rush to talk about that period because the memory was unpleasant. He said his niece Shailaja or brother Girija could fill in the information for that interval, and that I (as a prospective biographer) was myself well aware of the significant events after his return from exile.

BP used to say that while in India he worked and communicated more on the intellectual plane. The discussions he had during that time with

India's top intellectuals and senior-most politicians and policy-makers, had they been recorded, would have provided us today with much absorbing and useful information. That period of exile was a time when revolutionary movements were gaining ground worldwide, even as the Cold War between the democratic and communist forces was at its peak. In Europe, student movements were heralding a heightened awareness of changing social realities. With student power energising revolution everywhere, perhaps that was the source for BP's inspiration to start the Nepal Students' Union. In Nepal, India and Pakistan, too, new and revolutionary demands were being made for social transformation. It was in that context that, while in exile, BP rejected the usefulness of returning to a life in jail. He felt that what the people needed was capable and effective leadership. During occasional visits to Patna and Benaras, I was fortunate to listen to some of BP's discourses on the subject.

BP started analysing what he saw as a new departure being made by young people in the West, who were engaged in a leftist movement that fully accorded with democratic values. Lenin's interpretations of revolution once again began to attract him. Even though Che Guevara's revolution was still in its infancy, it provided BP with inspiration. But BP was hardly one to follow others blindly, and he studied Gandhi, Lenin, Jefferson and Che, all in the context of Nepal's reality. He was deeply committed to democratisation, economic development and social justice—not only in Nepal but in all other similarly placed developing countries. This is clear, for example, from an address he once gave to the Gandhi Peace Foundation titled "Gandhi: An Asian Challenge". It was against this backdrop that BP considered the direction of revolution in Nepal, and it was because of his awareness of the possible negative fallout that he decided to give a new moral edge to the movement with his call for national reconciliation, the message with which he returned to Nepal on 30 December 1976.

While in exile, BP sought the views of both supporters and opponents on the contemporary issues confronting the Nepali people. The political analyses and decisions he made then were thus neither isolated nor unilateral. And it was his ability to give expression to the entire nation's hopes, aspirations and sensitivity that made his words echo in the far corners of the country. Unfortunately, even if someone were to try and collect all the papers from those outside the country, I am not hopeful that the effort will meet with success. Nevertheless, the opportunity is there for an upright and capable researcher.

Girija Prasad Koirala, who even today hides his age and physical

failings to walk the field as an eager activist, has had continuous first-hand experience of the modern era of Nepali politics. He is also gifted with an extraordinary memory, but he is not someone facile in writing, and I am not in a position to ask him to record his recollections. Neither do I believe that Shailaja Acharya has the self-discipline required to pen her own reminiscences. It will therefore have to be someone else, who will record the experience of these close political associates of BP before the memories are buried forever.

Since the very beginning, I have been aware of those who did not appreciate my privileged access to BP in preparing these Recollections. BP himself was alert to the possibility of distortions in how he would be projected after his death. That was why he decided, when he realised that he would not be able to write his own memoirs, to present his Recollections through the medium of his voice. Tragically, fate intervened and all that BP remembered could not be captured on tape, and it is this unfinished work that I now present before the reader.

Every morning, before speaking into the microphone BP would discuss what subject to bring up. If he did not feel up to it, he would suggest postponing the session to another day. However, once he started speaking, he would get spirited and his voice would match the mood of his recollection. I remember once getting myself so carried away by the intimate details of the Pokhara sojourn when he was a personal guest of King Mahendra's, that I excitedly turned the tape-recorder off and asked him, "So how did your relationship come to sour so unexpectedly?!" He replied, in obvious bewilderment, "That is exactly what I have not been able to understand!" Till his last moments, I must report, BP had not been able to reconcile the contradictory nature of the late king's attitude towards him, at once both friendly and hostile. Indeed, the toughest and saddest episodes of BP's political life had all to do with King Mahendra.

These Recollections are the result of BP's continuous monologue in those taping sessions, which mostly lasted more than an hour but sometimes less. He would have me turn the tape-recorder off when he felt fatigued or if his voice gave out. BP did not speak these words with the aid of notes or references, nor did he ask anyone for help with his train of thought. Everything was said on the basis of instant recall, and it would be an understatement to say that BP's memory was uncommon. Once, a middle-aged villager from the Okhaldhunga arrive to pay his last respects, and BP regaled him with all kinds of dumbfounding details about the visitor's village and surroundings. He had recalled the place from back in 1947, when he was made to walk all the way from Dhankuta to the

Rana court in Kathmandu. At another time, BP surprised some of us lawyers by recalling the number of stone steps leading up to the ancestral house of our colleague Kusum Shrestha in the hilltop town of Bandipur, and the kind of windows and roof it sported. BP had been to Bandipur while organising the party units after 1951—whereas Kusum Shrestha himself had to ask a neighbour where the entrance to that ancestral house was, when once we went to Bandipur together!

I have felt it necessary to emphasise BP's power of recollection because some questions of reliability may arise, given that everything in this collection is the result of his unaided memory. Some errors may, of course, be identified, but I believe that we can safely rely on the authenticity of the material in these Recollections unless factual evidence proves otherwise.

These Recollections were taped by me between 1 December 1981 - 22 May 1982. Even though I had leave to be with him for an hour every morning, due to his infirmity it was not possible to tape on every occasion. From that monumental repository of experience and knowledge, therefore, fate allowed me to extract nothing more than a handful of material. On the day of my last session with him, when I lamented the fact that his life-story would now remain incomplete, BP tried to console me. He said, "Remember Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography too remained unfinished; he was only able to write about his student period, and about truth, vegetarianism and celibacy. He was unable to describe his political career, one which spanned from South Africa to Hindustan. Something similar has happened to my life story, with the incomplete autobiography that I started in jail but could not finish." BP then added, I remember, "Mahatma Gandhi titled his autobiography *An Experiment with Truth*, and I feel that my life too has been one continuous experiment with truth. I have always tried to discipline myself with truth. Had I had to provide a title to my autobiography, I too would have referred to truth and experiment."

I would now like to explain how it was that I got the opportunity to tape BP's reminiscences, and also why I waited nearly 15 years before publishing the transcript. Till the very last, BP had wanted to write two works himself: one, a history of the Nepali Congress party, and, two, his life story. As chemotherapy sapped his energy, he began to worry that he may not be able to get to do either of these tasks. Then one day, in front of BP, Shailaja asked me whether I wanted to write BP's biography. Though I had not yet shared the idea, I had already decided to write a book on BP's political life, including in it what I had learnt while fighting the seven or eight legal cases on his behalf during the Panchayat period. In the end, that would have provided at least a part of his life story. Because of this

personal plan of mine, I was mentally in a state of readiness to accept Shailaja's proposal. My enthusiasm for taping BP's recollections was further intensified when, from his sick bed, BP expressed his happiness with the idea and promised to cooperate.

Even though BP had said he would make available to me all his diaries and many other unpublished manuscripts, I did not have faith that the insular circle around him would allow me that access. So many of his wishes had remained unfulfilled because of this, I knew. BP himself obviously had his doubts, for he told me to trust only Shailaja when it came to accessing those papers. In a sense, therefore, these Recollections are the result of his lack of faith.

Only Shailaja and I were present while BP spoke into the microphone, and no one else was allowed to enter. After a session was over, he would emerge to speak to those gathered in the outer room, and there too I would try to keep on recording what he had to say. BP told me, "You will have to decide what to publish and what not to from what I have said, and also the timing." Deferring to the trust placed in me, I have listened to the tapes many times, including while transcribing them. As I was not practised at doing it, I had to rewind the tape again and again to take down his words correctly. I did all this myself. Even though I was a practising lawyer, at that point I had time on my hands because my practice was down to nearly nothing. That, certainly, helped bring these Recollections before the public earlier rather than later.

I had transcribed all the tapes in 1983, within six months of BP's demise. My method was to first go straight through with the tape, and then to edit the text to ready it for publication. While speaking uninterrupted into the microphone, BP used quite a lot of English, and it was necessary translate without losing the nuances behind his original thoughts. As happens when you talk, there were also incomplete bits and words and phrases which did not make sense; these I deleted in the editing. Where possible, I also tried to make the text follow a subject or context. Other than these editorial changes, I have not touched BP's thoughts as he expressed them.

It would have been impossible to get a consensus on printing the Recollections whole, and neither did I think it appropriate to consult anyone on the matter. The decision on what to take out or leave in would have required the moral stature of someone no less than the person who spoke these words. Using my faculties to the fullest, meanwhile, I decided that nothing in these memoirs would create difficulties if published in their entirety. Another factor that convinced me to publish these chapters

in full was that BP said things that would have made others hesitate, because of his ability to confront truth and reality. BP's personality was not the kind that sought undeserved acclaim or one that strove to hide its faults. So much of what BP has to say in the following pages consists of accepting responsibility for actions taken, and there are many places where he tries to reconcile himself with mistakes made.

I believe there is special weight to be placed on what BP had to say when confronted with death. If juridically even the last words of criminals are considered credible, here was a man who had achieved near-yogic status through his practice of humanitarianism. It was therefore not possible for me to expunge even a word of what BP said from his deathbed into the tape-recorder microphone.

In seeking the right time to publish this material, I had to take several things into consideration. BP's last political strategy had succeeded in re-orienting the Panchayat system from its old track, but he was gone before he could do more. Even though the political atmosphere was more open by the time of his death, it was not benevolent enough to allow publication of this manuscript within the country. Meanwhile, I was not agreeable to suggestions that this work—by someone who gave his all for the nation—be printed in India, to be imported to be read by his own people.

My calculation was that the political climate would be right for publication by the year 2047 or so (1991-92), and I became even more convinced of this after I spoke with King Birendra for the first time in 1990 about B.P. Koirala's national reconciliation agenda. After the People's Movement of 1990, even though I was a legal practitioner, I became embroiled in political controversy while trying to express myself in the changed political context. Had I published these memoirs under such circumstances, their reception would have been seriously prejudiced. Today, nearly a decade later, the climate has become propitious for the publication of BP's *Recollections*, particularly after the earlier publication of *Jail Journal*, his diaries from his time at Sundarjal Jail (Jagadamba Prakashan, Lalitpur, 2055/1997). That book was neither a life story nor a philosophical treatise, but BP's powerful description of life in detention, and incorporating his views on literature, philosophy and politics. *Jail Journal* helped add contours to the public's understanding of B.P. Koirala's character and career, and it paved the way for the publication of *Atmabrittanta*.

Of Mahatma Gandhi, Alfred Einstein wrote that it would be difficult for future generations to believe that such a person once walked this earth. I believe the same can be said of B.P. Koirala. However, if the Nepali people

themselves today know more about Mahatma Gandhi than about BP, it is not surprising that the wider world is unaware of the eminence of this son of Nepal. But even without all the facts, however, the Nepali public knows enough of his elevated visions and significant achievements to accord the highest respect to BP.

Even those who were in touch with BP found it difficult to fathom the many facets of his personality and aspirations. Nevertheless, those of us privileged to have encountered him have a duty to inform future generations of what we know and what we saw, particularly because so many priceless writings of BP's have been lost. A letter written to me by Girija Koirala after the publication of *Jail Journal* has revealed, tragically, that much of this material is indeed lost forever. As BP's sister-in-law Nona Koirala also wrote in a letter, "We were willing to give our lives for BP, but we were unable to protect his priceless writings."

I believe there must be a search to recover whatever is possible of documents relating to BP. For example, the then Bagmati zonal commissioner, Surya Prasad Shrestha, interrogated BP when he was taken straight to Sundarijal Jail after alighting from the plane on 30 December 1976 when he returned with the call for national reconciliation. The text of that interrogation must be with the government, as it is extremely important in both political and legal terms. The court proceedings are easier to find, but the related government papers remain locked away in obscure shelves. The tapes made during the interrogation must be located and transcribed, for I can say with confidence that no revolutionary has defended himself more eloquently and with such moral conviction as BP did while under military detention. Gandhi, of course, defended himself from a high moral ground, but his movement was not armed. Lenin certainly led an armed revolution, but he could not show the courage to face its consequences. BP comes across as exceptional in comparison. For this reason alone, both the court proceedings as well as the government papers of that period must see daylight.

I was personally a witness, on 30 December 1976, of BP's principled stand in front of the government interrogators. I was at Sundarijal Jail because I had been selected from among some names of lawyers given by BP to represent him. Even though I was requested to step out of the room while the questioning was on, standing nearby I overheard the legal defence that BP put before the government team led by then Assistant Zonal Commissioner Bishnu Pratap Shah. When he was asked about the hijacking event, for example, BP's defence was such that if they were to be transcribed and published they will stand as an illustrious example of

how one can and must fight for democracy. His was a defence based on unequivocal spiritual strength, and I remember well BP's wrathful mood and his sharp-edged arguments. I was privileged that day to countenance BP's stirringly fearsome incarnation at Sundarijal Jail.

That interrogation took place for all of seven hours across the jail's dining table, and was recorded in a powerful tape-recorder. These and other episodes are parts of history and no government has the right to make them disappear. However, the search for the documents is outside my ken. As I demanded, in the Foreword to *Jail Journal*, that Sundarijal Jail be converted to a museum to maintain its place in Nepal's history, I now make a similar plea for the authorities to locate and make public the full record of the defence made by BP while surrounded by the military there in the jail. If the government has any sensitivity towards a national leader of the country, it should do this.

If BP's personal papers have not been protected even by those near to him, perhaps it is too much to expect the government to have been more conscientious, particularly during the most recent periods of political turmoil. Nevertheless, unlike individuals, government has continuity and perhaps it is not inappropriate to rest some hope on the existence of these and other materials related to BP. Those in power should understand that there can be no pitfall in bringing the material to the public's view, for surely, by now, the papers cannot harm anyone politically. If anything, such papers will add political weight to Nepal's history and serve to educate and inspire future generations. The royal palace itself must be a repository of much material related to B.P. Koirala, and it too should be properly sensitive to the fact that the BP Papers are a part of the nation's heritage. Other than make a plea based on morality and good sense, there is not much one can do vis-a-vis the royal palace, however.

Turning to the logistics of the taping exercise, let me say that at first I did not have a tape-recorder. There was a nice 'two-in-one' in BP's residence, but the concerned person showed a disinclination to permit its use if he were not allowed to be present during the sessions. I was using various inadequate machines provided by friends until one day BP—who now had some money from contributions made by people for his treatment—asked me to take two thousand rupees to buy a tape-recorder. When I showed reluctance, he said that his daughter Chetana wanted a player and I could give it to her after our work was done. In the end, I did not need that money and returned it, but the episode goes to show how BP was unwilling to use the money he held in trust even to buy a gift for his little daughter. Such was his financial discipline. He was a handsome

man who looked good in anything he wore, but you could see that his dress was made with an eye on economy. He kept the black briefcase with the party funds, with its combination lock, close at hand and was parsimonious in reaching into it. When I once suggested that it was time he passed the responsibility to others, he replied, "You do not understand. They will spend needlessly." Knowing all this, it was hardly appropriate for me to take two thousand rupees to buy a tape-recorder. In the end, the work did not have to suffer for lack of a machine, and I am grateful to all my friends who helped me on this count.

Just as there would have been no dearth of friends inclined to support our work by making a recording machine available, there were many individuals who would have willingly supported the publication of these Recollections. However, I decided that the most appropriate person to carry out the task of publishing this unabridged *Atmabrittanta* was the litterateur Kamal Mani Dixit, who also published the earlier *Jail Journal* through the publication house Jagadamba Prakashan.

This is a unique publication, for I do not recall having seen any autobiography or life story that is in its entirety the result of tape-recorded recollections. Of course, because he did not write these words, in the text you may not see all of the extraordinary literary skills and signatures of B.P. Koirala. But, you do get to experience BP's forthrightness and the uninterrupted flow of his ideas, their cutting edge and their moments of flight.

Finally, as with *Jail Journal*, I have requested the publisher, Jagadamba Prakashan, to ensure that the royalty from the sale of *Atmabrittanta* be directed towards some humanitarian activity that would have been close to BP's heart; or, alternatively, towards any activity that goes towards enhancing the public's understanding of the life and times of B.P. Koirala. In conclusion, I would like to submit to the reader that original tapes of the Recollections have been handed over for safekeeping to Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya in Lalitpur. In case there is any debate over the published material, it is BP's own words which will have to provide corroboration. Having now handed over these tapes to Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya, I consider myself free of the responsibility of their care and protection, which I have carried as a willing burden to this day.

1 Baisakh 2055

Ganesh Raj Sharma
Dhobidhara, Kathmandu

1

I have never tried to write about myself. What I have felt, and I feel no different today, is that I have not done anything that needs to be recorded in a history book. During the long periods I spent in jail, with time on my hands, I did attempt to write about myself a couple of times. In doing so, I tried to describe the social and political system of the day. I found that I was writing more about others than about myself. In that manner, I wrote about two or three hundred pages while behind bars.

Another reason I have not written about myself is due to my belief that the time has not yet come for such an exercise. I have always felt that there is a lot left for me to do. To attempt to write an autobiography would, therefore, be quite out of context. That is why I could not begin, nor was I able to gather much material.

2

But I will again try to write. I will probably be able to present some material by recording what I have to say on tape. My friends and well-wishers also wish that I do this.

I suppose it is natural to feel proud of one's family, one's father and one's mother. But I do feel that my family was out of the ordinary, and that my mother and father were extraordinary personalities. The same was apparently true of my grandfather, about whom I heard from my grandmother. I have been greatly influenced by all of them, my father, my grandfather and grandmother.

My father was from the hills, a villager. I believe he left Dumja in Sindhuli and descended to the plains as an adult. By his own effort, and with his mother's encouragement, he studied. Coming from a Bahun family, learning Farsi and Sanskrit were, of course, part of his tradition. Because he believed the times required English, while in Kathmandu, he hired a Madrasi clerk from the British Legation as his English tutor. Back then, studying Farsi was important for government work. Believing it was important to keep abreast with international political events, he used to order newspapers from India. I call my father extraordinary because, as a man from the villages, he started without any background. How did he get the inspiration to do all this? There were two or three landmark events in his life, which have left a strong mark on my own worldview.

My father was active in business, and he earned quite a bit. He

established the town of Biratnagar: there was no bazaar there before, only Rangeli. He also established the temple of Kali there. Back then, the practice was for the authorities to farm out customs collection on contract, and my father ran almost all the customs posts of the country.

Once my father was returning on horseback from the Dhulabari customs post to Rangeli. A servant he liked very much was following him on foot, carrying Father's snack in a white piece of cloth. As Father recalled it, he had crossed the jungle and reached a large clearing; the servant was lagging far behind. Suddenly, he heard a voice from on high calling out his name, "Krishna Prasad!" He reined in his horse and looked around, but there was nothing to be seen. He was alone in the clearing, the jungle was a way off. It was getting to evening, about three or four pm.

Always self-reliant and confident, Father used to say, "Here I am, a village man doing lakhs worth of business. Whatever I touch turns a profit. I tried farming and did well. Then I got into trading and soon opened an office in Calcutta." He had married twice. He was proud to have earned the respect of both family and friends. Suddenly, in that forest clearing, he heard a voice, and it said: "Krishna Prasad, you have done all this for yourself. You gathered wealth for yourself, for your wife—all for personal gain. This hardly justifies your sense of self-importance. After all, what have you done? All your earnings mean nothing if you do not help others. Only selfish individuals feel satisfied with this much achievement."

My father used to tell us about that voice. It delivered to him a shock of revelation. My interpretation of that whole incident in the forest clearing is to regard that voice as a cry, an urging, from my father's inner self. That was not a divine voice. It was a semi-formed sense of guilt in his heart that had found expression.

And so my father came home and reported the experience to my mother. He said, "I just have to do something," and my mother encouraged him. He then told his associates, Hanumandas and others, that schools would have to be opened, and hospitals. They cautioned him, saying, "What is this? How can you do what the government is supposed to do? This will not yield good results."

Father replied, "I have already heard the voice of God. I have to do it." He travelled to Calcutta and advertised for a doctor and a teacher. Before long, he returned in the company of a doctor and a teacher. He opened a school and a Sanskrit *pathshala*. He paid a stipend to about 60 students who attended class. Then my father opened a hospital, the first in Biratnagar, which was later taken over by the government.

There is an interesting story about the teacher brought by Father. He was involved with a militant outfit called Anushilan, and had an arrest warrant on him in India. For that reason, he wanted to stay underground in Nepal for a while. He came as the teacher. He had two sons, Habuli and Subuli. I met the teacher later. He began sharing his anti-British ideas with my father, and explained the militancy that was going on in India. He also told my father about militant activities. My father, who often went to Calcutta on business, liked the good things in life. His clothes were made by a British tailor named Rankin, and his shoes were of British design from Calcutta. He was a connoisseur, although he did not display it. For example, he would wear his clothes wrinkled, or he would sprinkle dust on his shoes. But then during his visits to Calcutta, he began to take an interest in demonstrations and speeches. To learn more about the Indian national movement, my father used to subscribe to *The Statesman*, and later also started reading the *Amrita Bazaar Patrika*.

The doctor that my father had brought over was also very interesting. There is an amusing story relating to him. George V had come to the Thori jungle for *shikar*. My father was there at Thori, and there was a standing instruction to the doctors to take care that the soldiers gathered to welcome the emperor did not come down with cholera. No one was allowed entry into the camp without being checked by a doctor. The soldiers had come from Kathmandu under the command of Mohan Shumshere. The doctor who had come with my father was given the task of inspection. Mohan Shumshere told him, "How are you? Here, check my pulse. Give me a check-up."

The doctor checked up Mohan Shumshere and then allowed him to enter the camp. Then he began to inspect everyone; no one was allowed in without a check-up. It would have taken two to four days to see all the soldiers. Mohan Shumshere suggested that he relax the rule, but the doctor would have none of it, saying that his instructions were to inspect everyone. Mohan Shumshere asked how long it might take. The doctor replied, "It takes five minutes to examine one man. I work this many hours, so it can take up to 15 days." That doctor had a sharp tongue. Mohan Shumshere went to Chandra Shumshere, and reported the doctor's obstinacy. Chandra Shumshere made a show of being happy with the doctor. He patted him on the back, and said, "Good, this is the kind of upright men we need. What an independent-minded doctor!"

Such was the man my father had recruited as a doctor. Later, his relations with the government soured, and he left the service and joined the Bihar government in a high position. Much later, when I was living

the difficult life of an exile, I visited him once. He lived in Patna, and helped us time and again.

My memory of another incident with the teacher my father had brought is still fresh. At the time we had fled to Benaras, one day we read in the papers that one brother had been sentenced to Kalapani and another handed a death sentence. Their father, it turned out, was the same teacher we knew. My father said, "I will take you to meet a very unique man today." I was quite small at that time. We took the alley near Kali Mandir at Bengali Tole, and went to the upper floor of a house. There was a rug on the floor, and the teacher was sitting on it, having lunch. He looked up and said, "Oho! Khardar Saheb!"

My father said he had come upon hearing the news. The teacher replied, "I am not sad at all. At least one son was useful for the nation, and my other son is as good as dead. He will not return alive, and even if he does I will not be around. But what more could they have done for the country?"

I still remember those words of his. He also fed me a meal of rice. He then began to praise my father, "Your father is a great man. Do not ever forget that."

We must have stayed there for about half an hour. But that short visit left a lifelong impression on me. I was amazed by his attitude. He had no one, just those two sons. One had been sentenced to death, the other assigned to the black waters, and there he was all alone, sitting on a rug on the floor and having a meal. I have also never forgotten my feelings for my father, and the words he spoke that made me so aware of the issues of the day.

3

When my father was living in Chandraganj, an incident occurred that brought a significant change in his life. Chandraganj is a bazaar just past Jayanagar, which had been settled by my father himself. There was a small customs post near Siraha. The office was on the high bank of a large and lovely pond, and our house was across the road, I remember. Mother used to dress me up and send me over to the office. I used to wait by the side of the road because of the dust, and someone going across would take me to my father, that also I remember. I used to listen to the discussions at the office, although I did not understand them. I must have been quite the centre of attraction, with my fine clothes, and also because of Father.

Once, some *dhakray* porters came by as they usually did during the

winter. A large group of *dhakrays* was there, watching my father, who was supervising the weighing of something on the large scale. It was quite cold. My father saw their torn clothes and felt very bad. We had with us a man named Asarfi Mishra; his son visits me now and then. Father told him, "Have some clothes made for them, and bring me a set of what they are wearing."

Cloth was bought from a shop nearby and the new clothes sewn. Father then tied up the old sets into a parcel to send to Chandra Shumshere. He attached a sarcastic note which said, "Sarkar, I am sending this parcel so that you can see the difference between your clothes and the public's clothes. The packet might smell when it is opened, so please have it unpacked at a distance."

Before that, Father had set up a women's committee, which included my mother and the wife of our Kalidas Sardar as members. Mother had become like the secretary of the committee. He had asked Chandra Shumshere's *rani* to be the patron, and she had even agreed. My father had written to Chandra Shumshere repeating the sensational ideas of the day: that women and men were like the two wheels of a chariot and that you needed both wheels to run the chariot. And they had seemed agreeable to this. After that, the parcel arrived, and the reaction was far from favourable. Chandra Shumshere had not really liked my father's activities for a long time, even though he had remained civil towards Father. However, Chandra Shumshere did not show any immediate reaction to the matter of the parcel.

Many days later, my father went to Biratnagar. Back then, Keshar Bahadur K.C.'s father Col Jit Bahadur was the magistrate in Biratnagar. He trusted my father, who in turn often said many years later that Col Jit Bahadur had been very helpful. The order to arrest my father had already arrived in Biratnagar before he got there. My father had a lot of contracts and tenders. Some were still pending, while in others the accounts remained to be cleared. The plan was to hold him on account of these transactions. The colonel told Father, "You have a lot of business in Calcutta, why don't you go there? You haven't been to Calcutta for a long time."

Father said, "I do have to go to Calcutta, but I plan to go after Dasai."

He replied, "Dasai comes every year. It will come around next year as well. It will not be good for your business, go."

My father did not understand the hint, and said, "I will go home first and then go to Calcutta."

Then he said, "Why do you want to go home? Take my horse and go."

Father took the colonel's horse and went to his warehouse where rice was bought and sold. He collected what money there was, then went to a relative of ours and said, "I have to go away. Do you have some money?"

He gave Father some money, after which Father walked over to India, and arrived in Jogbani. The warrant was issued for his arrest as soon as he left. Since that day my entire family and I became like migrants, like gypsies. We began to live in India. They confiscated all of our family's warehouses and other businesses. All our property was taken, and the money owed to my father by many people was all cancelled by order.

This misfortune did not befall my family alone. There is a place called Gorkhay out east. My uncle, Dirgharaj's father, was in charge there. He was handcuffed and transported to Kathmandu. They also arrested my mother's grandfather, who managed to escape while in Dhankuta by giving a lot of money to the guards to buy beer and *raksi*. He escaped when they were in deep slumber. With the shackles still in place on his hands and feet, he jumped into the Tamur River. He was carried away by the current, and when he thought that was it, his feet touched rocks on one bank. He arrived in Dharan in that condition, and from there made it to Jogbani, where he had a blacksmith cut through the fetters. Thus, terrorised individuals from all over descended on Jogbani, where Father was. All of us went to Benaras after some time. We were a group of 45, and my father rented a large house there, in Thatheri Bazaar. It was a house with two large courtyards and about 20-25 rooms. There began our 12 years of hard living in the wilderness.

4

Gandhi had just arrived in India then, and his non-cooperation movement was in preparation. The events of those days left a deep mark on me. I remember three or four events of those days which were of international significance. One was the Russian Revolution, about which there was a lot of emotional reporting: now the poor, the proletariat, had got to rule; now the man behind the plough holds the power; women will not marry those who do not have calloused hands. That was the kind of thing that was discussed. My emotional side was touched by such information.

There was also much discussion about Kemal Ataturk in those days. He was the great statesman of the Turkey who tried to give a new direction to the country. Summarily, he got rid of the purdah system, and he had the

men abandon the red caps with the black tassels they used to wear, saying that they were links to discredited traditions. There were some protests, but the dissidents were ruthlessly suppressed. There were even orders to shoot protesters.

Elsewhere, there was a great movement underway under the leadership of Sun-Yat Sen. We followed these and other events with great interest in our house in Benaras. We discussed America a lot, its technological progress, its economic advances. We used to point out this or that action taken by Japan, an Asian nation.

However, it was Gandhi's movement which affected me the most. There were two or three political streams in India back then: one that took a soft line, another, that was Gandhi's, and a hard line faction which favoured militancy. In our house we used to discuss all these tendencies, and people representing all these streams used to call on us. Professors came by, and lawyers, and our house was like a centre, one reason because we were Nepali, and another because of my father. Many people visited and there was much discussion. We had Ram Chandra Adhikari, Manmohan Adhikari's father. He was given to debating, and he liked to look for hidden meanings in news reports and to interpret them. I was greatly impressed by this.

All these were very emotional events that were taking place in the world and around me, and perhaps this is one reason I also developed a sentimental personality. And I do believe that it is good to be emotional, because then you are transparent. People given to too much realism are not that clean.

I used to study in a Benaras municipal school. There was a teacher who was lame. He must have had some inner grudge, for he was a bit cruel, a bit hard. He used to use the cane. Perhaps his lameness had something to do with it. We used to be afraid of this teacher. Even so, after the 4 o'clock end of the school day, we used to emerge from the classrooms and shout a derogatory ditty against the lame man. We used to tease him thus, and the next day he would cane us.

At that time, I was at the entry level studying the alphabet. To write, we used wooden boards painted black and made smooth by rubbing them with conch shells. For ink, we used talc mixed in water, and we used pens of bamboo. My handwriting was good, but I did not like to study all the way from ten to four. My *thuldaju* (elder brother) Matrika Prasad was enrolled in Dayananda School, and it turned out that he never went to school. He was always in a rush to leave home, saying that school was about to begin. He would go everywhere but to school all day, and would

return home after four, as if he had spent the whole day in the classroom.

Once, there was a meeting addressed by Mahatma Gandhi at Asi Ghat. I remember every instance of that meeting, which was held not at a public place but in someone's garden. Back then, rich people used to keep gardens surrounded by walls, and Gandhiji's meeting was held in one such garden. I remember Gandhiji there, but not Jawaharlalji. But Thuldaju Matrika says that Nehruji was there that day. I remember what Gandhiji said, "Leave the government schools; study in the national schools." He also said other things along the same vein.

I was always keen to leave school, so I sprang up and shouted, "From today, I will not go to school!" It was examination time. Thuldaju was clutching at my kurta, trying to pull me down. But I kept standing and saying, "I will not go to school! I will join the boycott!"

On the way home, Thuldaju was very worried about what Father might say. I went and told Father what had happened. Thuldaju was studying Father's reaction. He said Bishweshwar did this and that, and father replied, "So he did well." Then Thuldaju said, "I also did the same." Then a problem arose: what were we to study and who was to teach us.

A Gandhi ashram had been established on the way to the university, in a place called Katara. Later, it was moved elsewhere. We were sent there to study, but how could we? The teacher had scabies all over his body, and he used to get the students to pluck *neem* leaves from the trees. But that school maintained a certain standard. That was where I first met Acharya Kripalani; he used to come on a bicycle. For us, it was a three-mile walk to school from Dudhbinayak and three miles back. That's how we started to study at that school.

There were two other Nepal families whom we knew in Benaras; one was Daman's father, Kedarnath Dhungana. He used to wear *khadi* and was politically very aware. We were also distantly related. The other was Devi Prasad Sapkota. Besides these, there were other families; which made up quite a Nepali community. But even with such a large community, I faced difficulty with the Nepali language. This difficulty has always stayed with me. The reason is that while we spoke Nepali in the house, outside it was Hindi and in school it was English. I never quite got rid of my confusion stemming from those days.

The Nepali community was continuously discussing politics. One thought was that the Indian national movement was not our movement. My father's point of view was that this was also our movement because the autocracy of the Ranas was supported by British imperialists. For that reason, the fight against British imperialism was also meant for Nepalis.

Others did not agree. Devi Prasad, for example, thought differently, and this debate continued for a long time. Later, when Praja Parishad began to talk about a people's movement, Chuda Prasad Sharma came over as their representative. He spoke to me at length about that. His point of view was also the same, "What do we care about the movement here?" Whereas Father, our family and I used to think that British imperialism was the biggest obstacle to democracy in Nepal, and, that the Indian independence movement was not only for the benefit of India. That was because the leaders of the Indian independence movement were great democrats like Gandhiji.

This was the political context that I remember of our childhood. I must have been about eight or ten.

From Benaras, we shifted to a village in Bhagalpur. The reason behind the shift is quite strange. The family was in dire straits. I cannot even begin to describe how bad our condition was. I remember clearly all of us gathering on the roof during the hot months to have a meal of soaked chickpeas. There were so many mouths to feed, and the mothers used to mix chickpeas, salt and molasses in large clay pots. All of us would be seated in a row. There would not be enough molasses for everybody. Despite all this, I remember that the talk at mealtime was a lot of fun.

I still remember one discussion, which had to do with Ram Chandra Adhikari. He used to say, "Chickpeas, do you know how important they are? Everything important that you would want in a diet is found in chickpeas. When Aurangzeb jailed Shahjahan, his father, he said, 'I will allow you only one item for your diet. What do you want?' Shahjahan replied that he would have chickpeas. He survived for so many years on a chickpeas diet. That is why chickpeas are good."

For long after, the romance of Shahjahan, Mumtaz Mahal and the Taj Mahal was attached in my memory to the romance of chickpeas. For this reason, these were the thoughts that affected me more back then than the fact that we were poor. So rather than remember those as the days of difficulty, my memory of the period is very pleasant.

There was a *mahatma* named Vasudev Verma, who remained for long like a respected member of our family. We used to call him Babusaheb, and he was perhaps somehow related to the family of Jung Bahadur. He told father that he had some money of his sister's, who was as yet a minor. Therefore, if my father wanted to use that money to start some farming, he was welcome. Father liked the idea and with others helping out, he bought a small plot of land in a place called Tedhi in Bhagalpur District. I have also been greatly influenced by that man, Vasudev Verma.

I still remember our arrival at Tedhi. The rice had already been harvested, and the yellow of straw was everywhere. It was very pretty, that village, between two branches of the river Kosi, with the village like an island in the middle. Our house was built like a *machan*, on thick stilts. Thus began our lives in Tedhi.

Father started a school, and he also brought in teachers. Babusaheb, who used to work for us, also came. He was also quite an extraordinary man. He used to say, "I will only eat one thing. Make me a large *roti*, that's all I will have." He was probably practising something. He used to wear patched clothes. He used to like me a lot, and used to tell me about the significance of torn clothes.

It is interesting that my childhood ended in Benaras, and by the time we got to Tedhi questions of morality had begun gathering in my mind. Babusaheb used to tell me that more than outer clothing, one should concentrate on inner beauty. He used to say, "These torn clothes are a great boon. On the one hand they provide cover from nakedness, and on the other they allow the air to circulate. You know how the body feels in a closed chamber. For me, these torn clothes are like the open doors and windows of a room." I remember liking the idea, that torn clothes were like having doors and windows.

We also heard a lot about art in our house. I believe that today's children do not have as much exposure and interest as we did. For example, my father and his cousin, Bhandai, used to talk about the Taj Mahal, and I would want to visit it. Bhandai used to say, "Fifty percent of the Taj Mahal's beauty is due to the material used. In itself, it is not that pretty, not like so many other temples: for example the Surya temple of Konark, the Kailash Temple of Ellora, or the many temples of South India built with simple stone. What is the Taj Mahal in comparison? Just think of the Taj Mahal as if it were built of regular stone, it will lose half its beauty right there. Now you cannot call that artistry. One cannot enhance artistry by making a Taj Mahal of gold."

These were the kinds of things that affected me, a child of seven or eight.

In Tedhi, I had a teacher named Rasbiharilal Kayastha. He was very sensitive to language, and he taught me a lot about literature, language and speech without my knowing it. We had to study Hindi; Nepali came only later. At that time, the talk was about Maithali Sharan Gupta, whose *Jayadrath Badh* and *Bharat-Bharati* were well known. He had also written *Priya Prabash*. The teacher used to tell us about all these works. I would like to give an example of what I mean, for even the other day I remembered

Rasbiharilal Kayastha. I received a letter saying that his son had died and I have not yet been able to reply.

So, he said, there is a clear difference between the words referring 'to go', such as between *chaandui* and *jhattai*, and *jaldi* and *turant*. To explain what he meant, he told us a Hindi couplet. Krishna played the flute, which Radha heard. So, he recited the *doha* which describes how Radha rushed to Krishna's side:

*Drak, jhathit, drut, tul, chipra, satvara, uttal,
turat chali chatur, ali, aatur, lakhi Nandlal.*

In other words, *drak* means fast, *tul* also means fast. "To move with alarm", "to rush", different words provide the nuances to the simple aspect of moving quickly. It is this type of instruction that made me sensitive to the use of words. He also taught me about the theatre. He used to stage plays like *Jayadrath Badh*, 'The Killing of Jayadrath', and I would always be given the part of the good character. All this affected me a lot.

This is how our studies progressed. Father had built a house like a hostel. We used to go home only to eat. That is how we lived in Tedhi.

About that time, there was an event which taught me that one has to pay a price for being good. There was a very pretty maid servant in our house; her name was Munaria. I have written about her in *Narendra Dai*. It was the time of Holi. We had a large mango orchard, with about 100-150 trees, and we were playing there. Narottam Adhikari, Dhundiraj and five or six others, and a bit in the mood of Holi, we started teasing Munaria. We were at a distance from the house, so there was no fear that anyone would hear us. At that very moment, Father arrived in the orchard. She told him what we were up to, "These boys are saying things to me, and using bad language." Father turned to the boys and asked if this was true, and everyone denied it. He turned to me, and I told him everything. He gave me two slaps. I was very hurt. Those who had lied got away scot-free, while I, who had spoken the truth, was punished. At the orchard, I held back my tears, but then I went to Mother and cried. She tried to comfort me, asking why I said such things. She did not understand. My sense of hurt had to do with the fact that I was beaten because I had spoken the truth. Since then, I have understood that if one speaks the truth, one should be prepared to pay for it.

My moral foundations came to be based on incidents like these. Father was very fond of freedom of expression. Every evening, we used to have debates, and some subject would have been chosen. I was always reluctant to argue a line that I did not believe in, and so was not able to present too many arguments. For example, we used to wear *khadi*, being Gandhians.

One day, the topic assigned was that *khadi* was inappropriate in economic terms. Thuldaju spoke for the proposition, while I said *khadi* was good for the economy. I made my presentation, "We wear *khadi*, so why does he say this is not good?" I used to argue that it was not good to debate on the side of a wrong. They explained that this was only a debate, but I would reply, "But even a debate cannot be about wrong things." Ideas that I developed during those days have stayed with me till this day. But Thuldaju could argue for any side. This, too, was part of our peaceful life at Tedhi.

We used to grow beautiful flowers in the garden. Father would wake us up at 3 or 4 in the morning and take us towards the river. After our ablutions, bathing in the river and praying to the sun, we used to return home and do drill. There was a Nepali ex-serviceman my father had employed, and he would instruct us. After breakfast, we used to go to study. This is how our days began. Father never beat us. If we failed to rise, he sprinkled water on our faces. One teacher used the cane, but when my father found out he discontinued his classes.

We lived five/seven years in Tedhi. Then the Kosi's floods began to threaten us. We had to use boats for up to six months of the year. For three months in a row, we had to use boats to go from the house to the kitchen, or to go out to the fields. The family began to discuss where to move.

5

For one reason or another, I wanted to go to Benaras to study. But we had no money and did not know the arrangements for admission. I wanted to go to a government school rather than a Gandhian one, and had my eyes on Harishchandra School. Father was unable to pay for my schooling. As it was, our house was in a bad state and ready to collapse due to the floods. When the waters receded, cholera and typhoid would be the order of the day. We were faced with these kinds of difficulties.

My sister Nalini said, "Sandaju, if you are so keen on studying, I have some gold that you could use." She was the only one with any gold in the household, and they were the little pieces on her ears. Back then, the custom was to sprinkle 'gold-water' if one came into physical contact with an untouchable. Whenever this happened the call would go out to find Nalini.

Sanima, my mother's younger sister, was staying with us. She liked our family so much she used to insist that she would marry into it. She got her way, and was married to Sushil's father, Bodh Prasad. She had a *tola*

of gold. Both Nalini and Sanima secretly gave me their gold and told me to proceed to Benaras. No one had any problem with my taking Nalini's gold but Father did not like it that his *saali* (younger sister-in-law) was contributing her gold and he became very angry. Sanima, in her turn, also got angry. She challenged him, "So, I am only a distant relation, is that what you mean?"

Worried that I would lose the pieces of gold, Mother sewed them into my underwear, and thus I headed for Benaras. Our grandmother was staying there, spending her *Kasibaas*. Two meals a day were taken care of by staying with her, and all I had to worry about then was the school fees. My father had two old friends in the city, an English professor at the Benaras Hindu University named Ganesh Dutt Shastri and the history teacher at Harishchandra School, Sitaram Pant. Both were hill people. Father had written letters to them and had told me to contact them. Sitaram Pant could be of even more help than Ganesh Dutt Shastri because I planned to attend his school. Upon reading my father's note, he said, "Okay, come on the first day of school. I will get you admitted."

I did as told, and took the admission test. Back in Tedhi, I would have been admitted to Class Eight, but I was afraid I might not be able to manage here. Sitaram Pant told the headmaster that he had already tested me, and that I could join either Class Eight or Seven. Taking the headmaster's suggestion, I started studies in Class Seven.

Upon admission, I had to pay the school fees. The class teacher asked me to make the payment the next day, and so that very evening I went to sell the gold pieces I had with me. I took Kisunji's elder brother, Batukji, and one Udayaraj Shastri along with me. We rushed through several places and, dissatisfied with what was offered, we ended up at a goldsmith's near Chowk. He cut the pieces of gold, placed them in the fire, and gave me perhaps 23 or 24 rupees, the price of a *tola* and a quarter. I paid for my tuition with that money and also bought some books. My studies had begun, and I began to enjoy myself. The only problem was that my grandmother was not very well off and my daily diet was restricted to two meals of rice, *daal* and vegetables.

The tuition came to three and a half rupees. I asked Sitaram Pant for a fee waiver, and half my fees was then paid for from the Poor Man's Fund. I still had to pay one rupee 12 annas, which was possible because I had no other expenses.

Thuldaju had already gone to study in Darbhanga before this. A good friend of my father's, a doctor in Saptari, had promised to treat him like his own son and give him 15 rupees a month. Thuldaju said, "Out of that

15 rupees, I will keep 11 and give you four." And so, every month he sent me four rupees. With that amount, I paid my fees, and also bought copies, an instrument box, soap, etc. My clothes I purchased ready-made from the Gandhi Ashram. I used to wear a set of clothes until it was in tatters, and then, go back to the Ashram for a new set. However, I used to keep my clothes clean, washing them once a week down by the *ghats*. When there was no school, I folded the clothes and put them away. Getting back from school, I would wear a Benarasi wrap and sit on a mat, with a *khadi* shawl around my shoulders. I was a good student, and the teachers were kind to me. In fact, I received quite a lot of respect in school, where the general view was that I was one who could be expected to stand by the truth. And so if anyone did some mischief, I was the one who was queried. I graduated from that school in 1929-30, after Class Ten.

During political agitations, we would organise strikes and sit-ins in the school, and I was always in the forefront. Apart from an English teacher, I was the only one in the school who wore *khadi*. That was also why I was held in some regard, even though that was a school run according to full British standards. There were inter-school debates, and I generally used to come first. I am still surprised that, as someone who had come from the "outside", I came first among 10 to 12 competing schools of Benaras.

Once, the governor of the United Provinces came to inspect our school and give away prizes. The programme required a poem recital, and for some reason I was pushed forward. I suggested a poem and the headmaster okayed it. I still remember some of the lines:

*I vow to my country all earthly things above,
Entire and whole and perfect, service of my love.*

That was an extremely patriotic poem and I was reading it in front of the British governor. Some teachers questioned the selection, but the headmaster said, "It's okay, what's the problem?"

While in Class Ten and a young Gandhian, I came into contact with some militants. Not that I did anything drastic. We were a group of five or six, and we had a revolver between us. With that firearm in front of us, we discussed the revolution. It was a romantic interlude. Because I was a Nepali, they used to say, "Lots of arms are available in Nepal. You help us by getting us guns." When I asked how I could procure arms and from whom, they replied, "Why, your country borders China." I said, "But everything that goes to Nepal goes from India, nothing comes from China." Their response was, "We will do something, but this is your responsibility." It was all very romantic.

There was no question of our returning to Nepal. My studies were over. Meanwhile, Grandmother having passed away, I now had the problem of finding a place to stay. I had passed my Matric exams, but there was no money for college. At that time, I got arrested for being part of a terrorist group. That was my first incarceration, around Dasai in 1930. Thuldaju was caught with me, and we were taken away early one morning and kept separately in the police station near Mahidagin. After questioning, we were taken to the Benaras District Jail. We got there in the evening, and my militant friends were fearfully watching us from beyond the police station compound. Looking out from the window, I could see that they had brought some fruit and sweets, but I was unable to receive them.

The jail was quite full. All the leaders of Benaras were there, Sri Prakash, Sampurnanand, and others. Lots of boys from the Monkey Brigade had also been locked up. The first thing they did when as we were brought in was give us a medical checkup. Both Thuldaju and I were put in handcuffs. Because he was an adult, Thuldaju was kept in a better place, with Sri Prakash and the others. I was sent to the minors' ward, but it was full of the Monkey Brigade boys and there was no space for me. I was therefore relegated to the solitary confinement cell. Thuldaju was in the company of people with good exposure, whereas I was left all alone. We were kept thus for three-four months. The place was dirty, and I had sores all over my body. For meals, a metal bowl with rice, *daal* and *parbar* curry would be slipped into the cell. There was an eye-hole at the door for the guard to look in. Two persons in adjacent cells shouted at each other, "Who is in Number Three?" and they both laughed.

We were taken to Motihari, where we were to be tried. A crowd came to look at us as we were transported to the train station. We were fair, tall and good-looking, and some people said we were "divine beings", and offered us flowers. We had an escort of four policemen in the third class compartment. There was a great peasant leader named Swami Sradhanand who was also in the train with us, and he gave us fruits. We were like heroes, and our manacles clanked as we walked on the train platform.

The trial began after we got to Motihari. One man was hanged; four or five persons were given life sentences. Basawan Singh, Yogendra Shukla and Chandrama Singh were also jailed following that same trial. About two to three hundred students had been brought to court for the identification parade. Handcuffs were taken off, and all of us were made to sit down in a line, our knees under a long piece of red cloth. We were thus displayed for half an hour, but they could not identify anyone. For

that reason alone, given the benefit of doubt, I was able to go free.

There was a "Hajipur group" among the militants, and I was in touch with them. I was also in touch with Chandrama Shukla and others. But because I was not involved with the dacoity affair, the trial against me in Motihari could not succeed.

It was after returning from that trial that I enrolled in college in Benaras.

6

During this period, my father's life, too, was undergoing a dramatic phase. At home, there was no food and one often had to go hungry. I had a brother, Harihar. When he died of cholera, the family did not even have money to buy a cremation shroud. My family was then based in Bettiah, but the members were scattered. My mother was all alone; my father was elsewhere. The menfolk sold newspapers, and with the small income it was possible to make *khundo*, mixing flour and vegetable to make a meal. We had a Nepali family for neighbours. Sushil's father, Bodh Prasad, worked in a shop and sold newspapers in the evening. I also sold papers. That was how we lived.

My father decided one day that this life of exile was becoming unbearable. He wrote a note to Chandra Shumshere, saying, "It has been a long time. Please allow me to return." But he changed his mind on the way to the post office, and returned without posting the letter. The next day, newspapers flashed the report that Chandra Shumshere had died and that Bhim Shumshere was the new prime minister. Subsequently, Bhim Shumshere sent a message and Father returned to Nepal.

I have spoken earlier of our time in Deepnagar village in Tedhi. I remember a couple more things about Tedhi. We were about four or five Nepali families there, like an island in the sea of Indian humanity. We spoke Nepali, our rituals were Nepali, and our weddings and celebrations were all according to Nepali tradition. Our Indian friends used to come and appreciate our Nepali peculiarities. Contact with them provided us with the impetus to learn Hindi.

And so, I read two novels. One was a newly released work by Premchand, *Karmabhumi*. The other was a novel titled *Bimata*, and I cried a lot while reading it. *Karmabhumi* was a thick book which was confusing because it had so many characters. There was some discussion about how it was not an original work, but rather based on Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. We used to get Hindi periodicals like *Chand* and *Madhuri*, and I read

them religiously. Because my father had chest pains at that time, he used to read at home.

We got Nepali books in bundles, with two or three copies of each. Chandra Shumshere had apparently ordered Kaji Marich Man, who looked after the Foreign Department in Kathmandu, to have every book published in Nepali sent to Father. He also sent medicine for father's chest ailment. Chandra Shumshere was also suffering from a similar problem, so he sent Father ayurvedic potions which had worked for him. Chandra Shumshere respected my father but would not allow him to enter Nepal. He was insistent that my father ask for forgiveness. My father returned Chandra Shumshere's respect, but he refused to ask forgiveness.

I have read some *Mahabharat* stories, such as *Jayadrath Badh* in Hindi. But I read all of *Mahabharat* in Nepali from a book sent by Chandra Shumshere, a well-bound volume with large type. I remember I read it cover to cover. Three or four copies had arrived, so one was also kept in the library. I began to appreciate *Mahabharat*, including its finer nuances, back then. I have been greatly influenced by the sections on Jayadrath Badh, Hedamba, Arjun-Indra and Karna. And then I read Tolstoy, who had just been translated. I read his short stories and found Tolstoy to be even more a moralist than a writer. Thus, it was the atmosphere at home during my childhood that aroused my interest in literature.

In Benaras, I wanted to buy books but had little money. I therefore used to frequent libraries. One was the Carmichael Library, but it did not have all the books I wanted, such as works by Russian and French writers. I remember a book by Victor Hugo, *Les Miserables*, that cost one and a half rupee, which I bought from money saved from what Thuldaju used to send me. The book was not available in Benaras, so I ordered it from Thacker and Spinks in Calcutta. I cried when I read *Les Miserables*; it greatly affected me. Sushila also regard that book highly. For me, it is one of the greatest works ever. Back then, I was in Class Eight. After that, I read books by Gorky, which contains some communist influence.

I became friends with Shanti Priya Dwivedi in Benaras. He was a great critic and a sensitive writer. Seeing my interest in literature, he started telling me about books and writers. Because of him, I came in touch with some great writers of Hindi literature—Maithili Sharan Gupta, Ram Krishna Das, Jaya Shankar Prasad. They used to meet at Ram Krishna Das's house at Ram Ghat. It was a grand house, like a palace. Shanti Priya Dwivedi was at that time the friend, assistant and librarian of Ram Krishna Das, and I would come and go with him. When I joined their gatherings they paid special attention to me, perhaps because I

was Nepali. I used to listen in on their conversations.

Jaya Shankar Prasad had a tobacco shop, near Dalmandi, and I often went there. I also got to know a Binod Shankar Byas. At about that time, Ram Krishna Das was writing new kinds of stories. He had published a new novel, *Kangaal*, which was much talked-about in those days. Jaya Shankar Prasad had a work, *Aansu*, which I liked so much that I committed it to memory. I had been affected by Maithili Sharan's works even earlier. This was the kind of environment that encouraged my interest in literature.

Premchand used to bring out a monthly named *Hansa*. Shanti Priya Dwivedi suggested that I write for the magazine, and I said, "Why would *Hansa* publish my writing?" He replied, "Why not? You just go ahead and write, it will be published." Soon after that, a story in hand, I approached Premchand in his office. I found him very soft-spoken and straightforward. He took my story and printed it after some editing. I cannot describe how I felt when that story was published. My work had been published, and in a magazine as celebrated as *Hansa*! I wanted desperately to share my joy. The story was titled "Atithi", I think.

7

It must have been my domestic environment that attracted me to Gandhiji. Then, by chance, while in Benaras, I came in touch with Marxist thought. There is an interesting incident in this regard. I had gone to Bombay, and while returning two or three people boarded and entered my compartment. They were linked to the Meerut conspiracy case, perhaps Dange was one of them. They talked to me, in a question-answer fashion much in the way of Socrates, and not by way of explaining things. This was a novelty for me, and I got a new perspective on subjects such as the material world, living, philosophy, Marxism and so on. We travelled together all the way from Bombay to Allahabad. I came to realise that I did not know many of these new ideas, and became extremely curious about Marxism. They did not talk too much about Marxism, for our conversation had more to do with their claim that Gandhi's ideas were romantic and not realistic.

When I came to Benaras for college, I rented a place at Chitpur Lodge. There, I came to know Dev Kant Barua, who pointed out the economic inequality and exploitation in Chitpur village. At that time, I had another friend, named Desmukh. I started a study circle to discuss Marxism. Dev Kant Barua, today's communist leader Rajeswara Rao, and another three or four people were part of that circle. We met secretly, even though that

might not have been necessary. We listened to Radio Moscow broadcasts from a receiver in the Engineering College. Radios were not in much use those days, and we had a makeshift receiver which had to be held close to the ear. We could not understand much, but were happy just to be listening. That is how I studied communism and developed contact with the Communist Party. My other friends, like Devendra, used to make fun of me for doing so.

I started ordering books on Marxism, and we started reading substantive works on the subject. The rule of the study circle was that one person would be assigned to read a book. He would make a presentation and then be questioned on it. Being the organiser, I ended up reading more books: Bukharin, Lenin, Trotsky. Back then, there was no talk of Stalin. I had already read the works of Marx and Plekhanov. This is how I learned about Marxism. (During my latest trip to Bombay for chemotherapy, I met one person from our Benaras group; he came to meet me with his wife.)

The most sensational event of the period was the Meerut conspiracy case, and we also got involved. Meerut Defence Committees were formed, and communists raised funds for the Meerut Defence Fund. I was given the task of going room by room through the university hostel collecting contributions. This is how I slowly got involved in Marxist politics. We even brought out a paper called *The Socialist*. I was the editor and a man named Barucha was the illustrator.

I found Marxist philosophy revolutionary, but had become disenchanted with some aspects of the communist movement. For there was the reality of the national movement of India in which my entire family had been engaged. In fact, I grew up amidst that national movement, with my father an active participant. It was difficult, therefore, for me to accept the view that that movement was nothing, that it was being masterminded by the British themselves, and that Gandhi was an unknowing agent of the British. I was also influenced by Trotsky's internationalism. I was certainly influenced by Marxism, but the communist party stopped exerting its pull on me.

Chitpur, where I was living, was a nice place. Two of us had taken a house together. I lived upstairs and Jayaprakash Narayan's younger brother Raja lived downstairs. He was also in my class. One day, when Jayaprakash Narayan had come visiting, Raja asked me, "Do you want to meet him?" I knew of Jayaprakash Narayan then but had not been introduced. I was greatly impressed by him. He did not use sophisticated speech and exhibited a simple personality. We spoke at length. At that

time, Mother was living with me and my sister Bunu was still a baby. This was about the time of the Great Earthquake of 1934. Jayaprakashji came up to greet Mother and showed great deference. He was extremely courteous.

At that time, Jayaprakashji was contemplating a socialist movement, and starting a socialist party in the context of the international movement. There was discussion underway about how Marxism could be adapted to the Indian condition. The Congress Socialist Party was formed, and I was an early member. My circle of friends liked the party's platform, and also the fact that one could remain part of the nationalist movement of the Indian National Congress and yet maintain a progressive outlook. Achyut Patwardhan, Devendra, Awadheshwar, and other friends as well as some younger members also joined the Congress Socialist Party. Perhaps because I was a Nepali, I was given a good position. They pushed me forward whenever it came to writing anything.

My contact with Jayaprakash and Acharya Narendra Dev increased, and I was engaged in lengthy discussions about our party's programmes. I was more active in Bihar, where my close friends Ramanand Mishra, Devendra and Awadeshwar constituted the socialist leadership after Jayaprakash. I also knew Rambriksh Benipuri, who brought out *Janata*, and became friends with Jagat Nandan Mishra. He had always come first in class, from high school to his Masters. Mishra later became the chief of Bihar's Public Service Commission. Through him, I got to read a lot of literature, including utilitarian reading. He supplied me with the books, and I read them—for example, the novels of T.S. Eliot, Bob Fletcher, Kafka, and James Joyce's *Ulysses*. I would never have been able to buy those books.

The problem I had with language, one which stayed with me for a long time, was that at home we invariably spoke Nepali, at school it was English, and at other times in the bazaar and with friends it had to be Hindi. In their homes, my friends spoke Avadhi or Bhojpuri, which I did not understand. I remember an incident from childhood: one teacher asked me whether I spoke English. I thought, just as Bhojpuri, Avadhi and Hindi were spoken from place to place, for sure English must also be spoken differently one area to another. Maithili was the language back in Tedhi, and in Benaras it was Avadhi. If Hindi changed from place to place, that must be the case with English. So I replied, "I only know the English of Benaras." I still remember how he laughed, and he said, "Fine! If you know Benarasi English, that is fine!"

Such were the problems I had with language. My grounding was good,

but I always found it hard to maintain purity because of this history. Devendra had very good English and he played a big part in teaching me to write well in the language.

We were taught *Nesfield's Grammar* in school, and I never read a book more ridiculous. It claimed that grammar was important so that one could read and write properly, and then it asked you to do things like parsing, which I detested. Later, Devendra was to teach me all that was required. My friends were very capable people. Morally and intellectually, they were of high calibre. In fact, we were at the level of the class above us. There was a senior student, L.K. Jha, who was very capable. We all used to engage in serious discussion on important topics.

Bernard Shaw became a favourite of mine in college. Devendra once gifted me two books of Shaw's prefaces and dramas. Reading them through, I decided I liked them. L.K. Jha had already emerged as a successful writer, and was published in *Aaj* and other papers. I also used to write a bit.

It was in this kind of atmosphere that I passed my BA. After that, my father once again sent me back to college to study. He had already returned to Nepal, and I received 30 rupees a month, which was enough. Devendra received 50 rupees, and he did not know how to spend the 20 rupees that used to be left over. This time, I went to Calcutta to study. I liked to write, so I wrote. I joined the MA course, but was not able to take the examination.

I had come to Biratnagar on holiday. My father-in-law (to be) was the commissioner of Jhapa. He came on an elephant to offer me Sushila's hand. He spoke secretly with Father. Shanker Ghimire's father had also come along, perhaps as his assistant. My father said, "What can I say? Speak to him." When they approached me, I said, "Whatever Father says is fine by me."

"Look at Sushila once and tell us," they insisted. It was arranged that I would "look" at Sushila in Calcutta. I then returned to that city and "saw" Sushila. She was young and thin, apparently having suffered from kalazar once. She was fair, had not studied much. I was quite distressed, but having already seen her I could not refuse the betrothal. And so I said, "What has happened, has happened. The marriage must take place soon." When it was suggested the marriage be postponed, I sent a telegram, "ON THE FOURTH OR NEVER." And so the date was decided, but I had no money for the ceremony. Devendra said, "I have four/five hundred rupees, put it to good use."

I went to a department store in Calcutta and bought myself a coat and a *sari* for Sushila. My brothers Koshu and Tarini were studying in Calcutta,

and I told them, "I am getting married, let's go." I took them with me to Benaras, picking up Devendra along the way in Patna. I had written home saying that no one should come and indeed no one had, not even Father and Mother. Just the few of us arrived in Benaras and we went to the appointed house. They thought we had come on a *janti*, and did *dwarpuja* and other rituals around me, the groom. We stayed in that house, which was an old building with just a few rooms.

I decided to call my old friends—Rustam, Gundu, Dev Kanta Barua, Shivmangal Singh Suman, and others. I thought, why not give a party after the wedding instead of calling them to the ceremony? The marriage was done quickly and with little fanfare. Afterwards, I gave a party for about 30 friends at a restaurant below Chitra Cinema in Chowk. The place was considered good in those days, and it was a modest but enjoyable party. My friends were all shocked, wondering why I had got married in this fashion. Gundu asked, "What's up? Why this marriage? She is not even educated. If it were for money, you did not even get that. She is just a child, and is not even pretty. Why did you get into this marriage?" After getting married in Benaras, we went to Patna, where I organised a party for my political friends, such as Jitendra, Jagat Nandan Sahai and others.

My mother took one look at Sushila and said, "I had hoped to get you married to an Urvashi, but look what has happened!" When we came home after marriage, Father was so dejected that he was lying on his bed with a pillow over his head.

Later, however, such a transformation came over Sushila that she became the most loved of our family. In terms of beauty, there was a time when my friends conceded the point that she was the prettiest of all. Once, in Hazaribagh Jail, during a discussion I was asked who was the prettiest person in the world, and I had replied, "Sushila." There was a man there named Kundan Prasad, very good and able, the kind you do not find these days. He said, "Koiralaji, indeed she is pretty, but it may be an exaggeration to claim that she is the most beautiful in the world!"

I challenged him, "Then tell me who else is more beautiful than her! Tell me who is prettier among the people we know." Those present thought for a while and in the end they all agreed with me that Sushila was the prettiest.

Indeed, a change overtook Sushila. I started to educate her, got her interested in yoga and in exercise. Her skin tone improved with some oil massage. This is how I re-created Sushila. I read aloud to her the poetry and literature I liked, explaining them to her, educating her. Along the way, I also finished my law studies.

Based on experience and study, I have developed some notions about marriage and conjugal living. I have read a book, *On Marriage* by Leon Blum, the socialist prime minister of France. He was a socialist leader and a one-time prime minister of France. His views on marriage have also influenced my own. According to Bloom, marriage and human sexuality are contradictory notions. The human mind is polygamous, whereas marriage tends to favour monogamous relationships. His suggestion was that the polygamous possibilities be exhausted before one gets into marriage. I appreciate his thoughts on the matter. Marriage is a matter of mutual understanding, not of sex. That is why men and women should be left free to have intercourse. Marriage should be later rather than earlier. The knot should be tied when the individual feels a need for a partner in life. I felt that Bloom had made an appropriate analysis of sexuality and the institution of marriage.

As far as marriage is concerned, my friend Devendra's experience was entirely different from my own. His father had made the arrangements, and Devendra came to talk to me, asking me what he should do. I said, "We can have differing notions about marriage, but marriage is like jumping into the dark; it succeeds neither on the basis of beauty nor on the basis of sexual compatibility. It is difficult to say why it succeeds when it does. Some people are of the marrying kind, others are not. That is why getting married is like jumping into the dark, I feel."

Devendra's problem was that he had sent a friend to look at the girl that his father had chosen. It turned out that she was dark-skinned, which Devendra did not appreciate, and that was why he had approached me. I was already married. I said, "If you want to get married, do not investigate too much. You will be disheartened even if you get an Urvashi. If you have to get married, do not fuss about the choice." Devendra and I had got married one after the other. Mine was a complete success, his, a total failure. Indeed, marriage is like jumping into a void.

8

At about that time, there was some discussion of a socialist movement, and in the beginning the communists were part of it. A well-organised socialist movement began after the Congress Socialist Party was established under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan. There was a difference of opinion among the Gandhians and the socialists, which endured for a long time. Gandhi was given to religious discourse and

spoke of "*Ram rajya*". He favoured class conciliation rather than conflict, and went so far as to call capitalists "trustees". All these ideas were in opposition to Marxist principles, and so the socialist disagreed with Gandhiji on this matter, even though they respected him as a leader. Jawaharlal Nehru used to go time and again to consult with Jayaprakashji and I thought this was appropriate.

This was the time when I went to Darjeeling, thinking of starting a law practice. I do not know about the great jurists, but I did not like the way lawyers talked to their juniors. I remember being interested in constitutional law and political questions, but having no interest in property wrangles. I also remember preparing a brief on behalf of a Tibetan, an important trader. That was the first time I got a lawyer's fee. My senior was Hari Prasad Pradhan, who had given me some cases that provided me with an income. However, I disliked going to court.

I used to write in Hindi at that time, and Surya Bikram Gyawali wrote to me from Darjeeling, "It is not proper that you write in Hindi. Why do you not write in Nepali?" I decided that I should start doing so, and wrote a story, "Indrabadan", which became talked about and considered innovative. In that story, there is a woman and her young daughter. The husband has gone somewhere for a year. Her daily life is shown to be marked with continuous boredom. She sees a man on the veranda and he becomes the object of her desire. In the story, I tried to deal with the psychological aspects of the situation. "Indrabadan" was published in the *Sarada* monthly, which was edited by Siddhicharan Shrestha. I met him for the first time when he came for Indira's wedding. I wrote about 15-20 stories while in Darjeeling.

At about this time, until the Second World War started, debates were about the Spanish Civil War—the fight between Franco and those who were for the republic. We were completely on the side of the democrats, of course, and I had even applied to join the International Brigade. Jawaharlalji was planning to send a brigade from India, and I had wanted to go. But the contingent never went. Now that was a civil war which had great emotional impact, and I, too, discussed it at length wherever I went. Reading books, reading the papers, back then I used to think that all this was preparation for a great fight.

The rise of Hitler was, of course, thoroughly discussed in the political literature of the day. Also Mussolini, who had been a socialist before he turned dictator. I used to read everything I could get about Hitler. The communists used to say, "There will be a big fight. We have to remain prepared."

It was during my time in Darjeeling, with the World War already started, that Tanka Prasad Acharya and others were arrested in Nepal. I immediately made the decision to get involved in my country's politics. This was not the time to practise law, but to get involved in the struggle.

There was an inherent contradiction in our endeavour, of course, for we were staunchly opposed to Hitler and against British imperialism. In the context of the World War, it was British imperialism which was fighting Hitler. Within Europe, the British were alone in effectively confronting Germany. We used to hope for Hitler's defeat even while wishing for the departure of the British from India. I remember an article I wrote at that time suggesting that this imperialist war should end in civil war. That was printed in *The Searchlight* of Patna.

For some time, I worked as a labour organiser in Bihar. They would send me, and I would go and be arrested. Between Darbhanga and Samastipur there was a large jute mill in a place called Muktapur. There was a sugar mill in Darbhanga District, where, too, I was active. The police officer for Darbhanga was a Britisher with sympathies for the Labour Party. After my arrest, I was brought before him. He said, "I, too, am of the Labour Party. What you say is what we say. But you will not have it easy if Hitler wins." I remember very clearly my reply: "That is a problem among you Europeans. But we, too, have the problem of our independence."

Upon my release, I first went to Janakpur. During the Quit India movement of 1942, I was in Biratnagar. Many activists from Muzaffarpur and Motihari had fled into Nepal, and Father said we must give them shelter and security. In order to make arrangements, he headed for Janakpur, where we had a rice mill. Meanwhile, I made my way to Patna and got there after some difficulty—the trains were not running because the tracks had been uprooted. I made it to Patna by walking some of the way, and taking taxis at other times. When I arrived in the city, I realised that I had no friends left there. Some had been arrested, others had fled or were underground. I went onward to Arrah in a single-horse carriage. Even though Devendra had fled Arrah, I went to his village. I was seeking my friends in order to share my belief that this was the time for us to do something. I was trying to establish contact with Jayaprakashji when I got caught. I was arrested the day after I arrived in Patna.

At that time, in Patna, I used to stay with Kalibabu. Devendra was still at large. When the police arrived to get me early in the morning, I sent a word of warning to Devendra, but the police had gone for him as well. He had also sent me a similar message. And so the two of us met in the police station. In order to lock us up, they needed the magistrate's order, but it

was a Sunday and the courts were closed. The police took us to a junior official at the District Magistrate's office and said that we both had to be jailed. As he booked us, the official said, "All my sympathies are with you. I am sorry to have to send you to jail. The best I can do is to put you in the 'A' category."

We were then sent to Bankepur Jail, where Dr Rajendra Prasad was also kept. A room in the jail's hospital had been cleaned and readied for him. Another large hall had been emptied and made ready with two beds. I was given one of those beds. The rooms were nice. Rajendra Babu and I were kept there as prisoners of the central government. Devendra was also kept in the same jail, and many other friends joined us there. The food was also not bad. We debated a lot with Rajendra Babu. After all, we were proud socialists and we were quite excited by our new ideas. Rajendra Babu, meanwhile, had a religious bent. With him was Mathurababu, my classmate. They were used to reading *Mahabharat* and *Ramayan*. In the latter, they were more interested in the rural descriptions, trying to decipher what Ayodhya or Kiskindha or whatever would be called today and where they might be located. Or they would be discussing how many miles made a *yojan*. Once, Rajendra Babu turned to us and demanded, "Okay, tell us, what is socialism?"

Back then, there was a book that I liked very much, written by John Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*. He had also become a minister in a Labour government. In the afternoon after mealtimes, seated in a kind of a garden, we would discuss socialism on the basis of that book. A few others would join us.

The hot months began, and the governor had come to inspect the jails. He first visited Rajendra Babu, and because I was a prisoner of the central government he also came to me. When he learnt during the introductions that I was from Nepal, he asked me, "How did you get mixed up with this lot?"

I replied, "I do not know why I was arrested."

"Do you mean to say that you would go back to your country?" he asked me.

I said, "Yes, I would."

"Then write an application." Turning to the jail superintendent, he said, "Superintendent, send the application to me, I shall take the necessary action." Then to me, he said, "Do not get involved with these people."

The governor asked Rajendra Babu, "It is very hot in here. Do you want to sleep outside?"

He replied, "Do what you feel like, but I am not interested."

He instructed the jailer and left, and after he was gone Rajendra Babu turned to me and said, "What did you just say? If you go to Nepal, they will kill you there. Don't do this. The rulers there are barbarians, and they will do away with you."

I kept quiet. When night came, they took his cot outside. Rajendra Babu asked, "Are you not bringing Koirala Saheb's cot outside too?"

The jailer said, "The governor did not say anything about him."

The Rajendra Babu replied, "In that case, I will not sleep outside either." After that there were many phone calls to and from the governor, and the next day the order came that I too should be given the outdoor sleeping facility.

Rajendra Babu was that kind of thoughtful person. The governor once ordered a fan for his room, but he refused to have one installed unless I got one too, which I later did.

I was later moved to Hazaribagh Jail, where once again I found myself next to Rajendra Babu. It was during that time that Gandhiji had gone on a fast, when he was under house arrest at the Aga Khan's palace in Bombay. The situation was so alarming that the British government had even made contingency plans to handle the situation in case he died. Sandalwood had already been made ready for his cremation. I remember Rajendra Babu telling me, "Now Gandhiji will not survive. It is unfortunate that the question of his life or death has arisen during this time of war."

It was in Hazaribagh Jail that I made contact with the great leaders of Bihar such as Sri Krishna Sinha, Anugraha Narayan Singh and other socialists. The A-class prisoners were kept in Hazaribagh, while the C-class prisoners were kept by the thousand in a big camp that had been established.

We were many friends together in jail, so we used to discuss, debate and quarrel. My friends respected me, but they also said that I had a short temper. I had been given two men, one a *paniya* or *pipa* to prepare my food and another to clean the room. The former had worked as a cook in the Grand Hotel. He would cook over a stove the shape of a bucket, and he taught me to make chicken roast and so on. He prepared quite a variety of meals.

Once, I went to the doctor's for something ordinary. But the doctor prescribed a daily diet of chicken, apple, fruits, two pounds of milk, etc. I could hardly have eaten all that.

On 9 August, the day Gandhiji flagged the Quit India movement, everyone decided to mark the occasion by pinning the flag on our clothing. I took a bath and was the first to emerge, wearing a flag. Some others had

warned me not to do so. It turned out I was the only one with the flag; no one else had done as planned. The jail's British clerk approached me during inspection. At first he asked me how I was doing, and the state of my health. Then his eyes fell on the flag I was wearing. He barked, "Jailer, can a prisoner display a political insignia?"

The jailer said, "No, sir."

He turned to me, "Mr Koirala, you must remove it."

I replied, "No, I will not."

"Then you will be punished."

"I am willing to suffer, but I will not remove this."

By that time a crowd had gathered, among them many who were my followers. All the youth who used to follow my lead had gathered.

The clerk turned to the jailer and said, "Put him in solitary confinement."

Someone who liked me so much was suddenly ordering such a harsh punishment. When they took me away, the young prisoners started a racket, shouting, "Take us! Take us, too!"

Doing the rounds, the clerk reached Sri Krishna Sinha, who asked him what the noise was all about. The clerk told him what happened, saying that Koirala had done this and that.

Sri Krishna Sinha suggested to him, "You are needlessly creating a problem."

The clerk replied, "But I will not allow a prisoner to destroy discipline in jail."

But Sri Krishna Sinha persisted, "This was unnecessary."

I do not know what went on between them, but there was a general uproar in the jail. As a result, I was not taken to solitary confinement, but instead, they locked me in my room after the evening meal. I had a separate room, which was what helped me read a lot. There was a great and angry reaction to my being locked up, and when the prison gate was opened the next day, a contingent of armed police entered. When the bell called *pagri* was rung, the force from outside was supposed to enter. The force carried out a *lathi* charge against the crowd of prisoners, and as soon as it began everyone started shouting "*Pheta bandho!*" (Tie your turban.) Everyone used their *dhotis* to tie turbans around their heads. The jail authorities had a difficult time controlling that crowd. This is one interesting incident that I remember.

The problems with my throat also began about that time. Later, after my release, I was operated on at the Tata Institute of Cancer in Bombay.

9

My experience with the British during my stays in jail was good. I stayed in the jails of British India, but my friends have spent time in the jails of present-day India. Chakra and Sushil too have spent time there. The jails with British officers were run with fairness. They could be harsh, but they were always fair. For example, I remember that altercation with the jail clerk in Hazaribagh. My health improved during my stay in that jail, and we were never made to feel want for anything. We were allowed books. The clerk had borrowed my copy of Strachey's *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*. Once a month, a bazaar would be organised in the jail, where shopkeepers came from outside to sell soap, toothpaste and sundry items. We were able to buy what we needed.

Our friends there were Yugal Prasad Sharma, Jagjivan Ram, Satya Narayan Sinha, Ram Briksh Benipuri, and others. Once, there was an incident involving Ram Briksh Benipuri, in which the fault was mine. Others had a common stove, but I had my own, on which I had put some water to heat for a bath. Ram Briksh Benipuri had apparently removed my bucket, and put his own on the stove. When I found out what had happened, I became upset and kicked his bucket from the stove. He got very angry, saying that I did not have to use my foot. Things became tense, and around me there were youth ready to fight, who would have done anything I said. One Punam Babu forced us into a compromise. He said, "You are a foreigner. You have little relevance for our fight, but Ram Briksh Benipuri is important." He got us to settle our differences, and later, Ram Briksh Benipuri came up to me and said, "Hey, Koirala, why did you get so angry?" Our relationship was back on track, but such kinds of tension cropped up time and again. By and large, however, we were all quite happy together.

I was finally released in 1945. Father died the very day I got out of jail. I had received his letter while still inside. He had known that I would be released. I was out of custody, but my movement was restricted to Patna. I went straight to Kalibabu's from the train station. Thuldaju had sent Girija to meet me. Girija was then studying at Anne Besant College at Raj Ghat in Benaras. We were finding it very difficult to find a place to stay, which is why we were at Kalibabu's. Devendra had been restricted to Arah, but with some effort he was able to get shifted to Patna.

The World War was ending, and the communists tried very hard to get me to join them. While I was in jail, I had read two very impressive, philosophically oriented books, one *Socialism Reconsidered* by Datwala

and the other *Gandhism Rediscovered* by Minoo Masani. I wish I could read those two books again, for they brought about a transformation in my thinking. The authors tried to show that Gandhi was a revolutionary, and how he tried to define progressive socialism in the context of India. They studied Gandhi not as a traditionalist but through the prism of Marxist thought. Minoo Masani has shown clearly that a blind application of socialism was not possible and would merely wrest freedom.

The communists were trying to get me join them actively, and they visited me daily, morning and evening. Manmohan Adhikari had been jailed. When he was released, he too was sent to me. I used to give Manmohan books to read. We would discuss Yugoslavia. By then, I had become a proper anti-communist. For a long time I had had negative feelings about the communists. They had supported the British during the World War. At first, when Hitler and Stalin had joined hands, they called it the "war against imperialism", but after Hitler invaded Russia it became a "people's war". I criticised them strongly for this. They got exasperated with me and started opposing me and criticising me.

My health deteriorated around this time, and no treatment seemed to work. I started vomiting blood. The All India Congress Committee was set to meet around October 1945 in Bombay. Rajendra Babu was then president of the Congress Party, and he took me along. He kept me with him, wrote letters to doctors, and later had me admitted to Tata Memorial Hospital. He also wrote to a doctor named Duncan, who had been knighted in England. I was operated on, and spent about six months in Bombay recuperating.

10

In 1946, India was in the process of becoming independent, and there was a debate on about what kind of 'independence'. The main question was whether to have independence with or without partition. Back in England, the Conservatives had lost and Attlee's Labour Party had come to power, and the British did not have the capability to maintain the empire. There were two schools of thought: Gandhiji's, which the socialists also supported, and the official Congress line. Gandhi was of the view that we should not agree to a divided India, and he would rather agree with Jinnah and give him power than face the spectre of partition. The socialists were of the view that this was all a British conspiracy. It was 1946, and talk of joining the

government was in the air. I was with the socialists, and supported Gandhi's approach.

With the World War over, a new situation arose in the region. Many Nepalis had been jailed in the context of the 1942 movement against British India, for example, Dharmidhar Sharma, Surya Bikram Gyawali and many others from Darjeeling. In Benaras, too, many Nepalis had been taken, including Surya Prasad Upadhyaya, Dilli Raman Regmi and myself. Everyone knew Juddha Shumshere was a harsh and bull-headed ruler incapable of understanding the changed situation. Padma Shumshere, on the other hand, was a more flexible man. Even earlier, his views had favoured a benevolent policy.

I was happy when Padma Shumshere became prime minister. I even wrote to him when he became assumed the office, suggesting that he begin the process towards democracy by allowing people to engage in politics. All this was while I was still in Bombay undergoing cancer treatment. Returning to Patna, I was sure that the British were leaving, but it was not clear how they would go and what they would leave behind. We may have to engage in another fight, perhaps one according to Gandhi's beliefs and under his leadership.

On 4 October, 1946, I released a statement stating that since the World War was over, it was time for freedom. Nepalis must join a broad-based democratic organisation to take advantage of the situation. In addition, the statement urged all those who agreed to get in touch. That was printed in *The Searchlight* as a letter to the editor, and other papers also carried short notices. I had discussed the matter with my socialist friends Jayaprakash Narayan, Rammanohar Lohia, and others. I felt that the Indian Congress Committee and socialist leaders would support the democratic movement we were about to start, for the movement led in India by Gandhi did have an international aspect, one which supported the freedom struggle of people everywhere. For that reason, and also because I had had extensive contacts with them, I felt that they would be supportive. There was an overwhelming response to my call. I received letters and people came to visit, some of them secretly from Nepal.

I decided that it was important to give our effort an organisational structure. For that I went to Benaras genuine where I met Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Gopal Prasad Bhattarai. The latter had completed a journalism course at Kashi Vidyapeeth. He was a dedicated *khadi* man, and he showed great interest in our movement. I also met Bal Chandra Sharma, who was not interested in politics. He had just completed his MA and was in search of service. There had been a Hindu-Muslim riot in

Darjeeling. Some Marwaris and other businessmen had helped Nepalis build an organisation in the belief that the Nepalis would give them protection. The organisation had a building, two telephone lines and every other kind of facility. They wrote saying they were willing to help and asked me to visit. D.N. Pradhan was the secretary of that group. Rudra Giri worked in Calcutta as his uncle's trade representative. He used to have some money with him. There was one other person, M.D. Perrier. I was in touch with persons like these, most of them from Darjeeling. Two were from Nepal, a brother-in-law of Mahabir Shumshere's and Rudra Giri.

Mahabir Shumshere's brother-in-law told me that he had been trying to meet me. He was a whimsical character, Mahabir Shumshere. When the British were leaving India, he told the British government that they should give him an island offshore from Burma or Arakan, which he would rule as a king. He had money enough. He also had some interest in music and was learning the violin. He lived ostentatiously and was proud of his wealth. What was also interesting was that he had taken the very house in which Warren Hastings had lived, on Hastings Road. And so off I went to meet Mahabir Shumshere in his palatial surroundings.

After keeping me waiting for quite a while, his brother-in-law sent up a message: "Your Excellency, B.P. Koirala is seeking an audience with you." He had written the note out of my sight, and told me about it later. Mahabir Shumshere called me upstairs, and what he had to say was: "I will make the arrangements if you need money. My brother Subarna Shumshere and I have agreed that he will match whatever amount I give. So, you go ahead with your work."

We were engaged in discussions back then. A committee had been formed in Calcutta and another in Benaras. The Benaras group was made up of people in penury, and was running without money. Devi Prasad Sapkota, a contemporary of my father's, was still alive. We felt that he should be the president, and I think the idea was to make Gopal Prasad Bhattarai secretary. It would have been a preparatory committee for forming a party.

At that time, my relationship with Jayaprakash Narayan was more personal than political. When travelling to Calcutta, we both used to stay at the same place, a Marwari businessman's establishment called Marble House. My other friend was Rammanohar Lohia, who was very popular and famous. He was very close to Gandhiji, and I felt that taking his support would be good for our movement's publicity. He would also be like a shield. When we approached him, he said, "I will help."

Jayaprakash was also approached, and he said, "It sounds okay." He was not one to make promises, but Lohia was an open and helpful man. He would say, "Come on, Bishweshwar, let's go for coffee." It would be 9 pm, and we would go out and talk of all kinds of things till late when the shops were pulling down their shutters. He would sleep till late, and he did not even need a separate room. There would be huge mattresses of the kind that Marwaris use, and he would go to sleep on them. I did not see him read too many books, but he did read the papers voraciously. At that time, he was the secretary of the Socialist Party and looked after foreign relations. Jawaharlal Nehru had taken him in when he had returned from Germany and asked him to look after the Congress Party's foreign department. When the Socialist Party was started, he became a prominent leader and looked after its foreign department. He was a hard worker and helped me in every way.

When it was decided to establish a party, the question before us was where to hold the conference. The Calcutta people wanted it in their city; after all, they said they would be bearing the expenses. I preferred holding the conference in Benaras, but the group there could not have come up with the money required. In the end, it was decided on Calcutta.

Let me say a few things about personalities at this point. For example, that of Bal Chandra Sharma's. His personality later became rather distorted. When I first met him, he had no interest whatsoever in politics. He was living with his elder brother and sister-in-law. He had a classmate who owned an aluminium factory and needed a manager for its electroplating section. He had been told that he would be appointed to the post the next day. After he heard me out, he was of two minds, and said, "Please give me a few days to decide."

Bal Chandra Sharma took up the job, decorated his office, had furniture bought, and started work. Then, three or four days later, he said, "I will give you my answer tomorrow. You come to my office." I knew where his office was, so I went over. He also had a secretary. He said, "I have thought about your proposal, and have decided that it is better to serve one's country than to work like this." He then got involved in politics with great commitment. Kisunji was not that involved, but Gopalji was another hard-working activist. Kisunji, who was studying for his MA, said, "I will also drop my studies and join you." Batuk Prasad Upadhyaya was interested in bringing out a paper, so he began *Yugavani*.

11

I also had interesting experience with Ganesh Manji. He had escaped from jail and by the time he arrived in Benaras he was already a romantic figure. Because he was an escapee, there was some fear that the British might arrest him. He therefore remained in hiding. Ganesh Manji dressed in blue trousers and a blue cardigan, and always had bits of paper and newspapers stuffed in his pockets. With unruly hair, he used to rush about on a bicycle. You could barely catch a glimpse of him before he was gone. He was always hanging out at different places, and travelled constantly between Calcutta and Benaras. However, I feel he had not yet been able to accomplish anything significant. I felt it was important for me to meet Ganesh Manji.

There was a Newar businessman in Thatheri Bazaar, Dev Shankar Lal, who today works at Meera Home here in Kathmandu and lives by himself. He was of great help to our cause. Ganesh Manji used to visit him, so I asked him to arrange a meeting. That was a period when we were in great financial need. I had to travel to Calcutta to collect money. Going from Patna to Benaras, of course I could take money from Devendra, but there was no source when we had to go in the other direction, from Benaras to Patna or Calcutta.

Gopalji's elder brothers, Batukji and Narayanji, had earned a lot of money by speculating in silver. When I visited them, I saw carpets on the floor, fine furniture, good food, and six thousand rupees in the bank for the education of their younger brother. I was served on a silver plate. I was surprised. How had they become so rich? "We have earned a bit from trading forward in silver," they replied.

But when I went there a few days later, everything was being sold, and there was less ostentation. Their condition was back to where they had apparently started from. I found this rather interesting. They liked me a lot. In bad times, even to order something as simple as tea, they would discuss in whispers, "Do you have money? Koiralaji has come, and we must offer him good tea." This would be whispered between husband and wife. When they were doing well, they would call everyone over and host great feasts. When without money, they made do the best they could, exhibiting no great sadness. I liked this take-it-as-it-comes attitude immensely.

I had decided to meet Ganesh Manji, but this presented Dev Shanker Lal with a hilarious problem. Where should we meet? BP could not go to meet Ganesh Manji because of his standing, nor could Ganesh Manji visit

BP because of *his* standing. He wasted several months just trying to decide what to do. Where to arrange the meeting? Finally, I got irritated, and said, "What's all this about rank? I will come to your place and we can meet there."

Ganesh Manji's attitude apparently was, "Why should I go to BP? He can come to me." So I told Dev Shanker Lal, "Stop this nonsense, and get me together with Ganesh Manji." At one point, Ganesh Manji and I were to be in Calcutta at the same time, and so he decided to have us enter a hotel simultaneously. But for the sake of Ganesh Manji's ego it was important that he should not be seen going to Calcutta for the express purpose of meeting me. As it happened, he was staying at a Newar merchant's house at Chitpur Road, while I was at Marble House. I was asked to arrive for tea at a Punjabi restaurant at Chitpur Road at exactly 4 pm. Ganesh Manji had been instructed similarly.

I arrived five or ten minutes early. Dev Shanker Lal thought that was problematic, "You got here early, Ganesh Manji has yet to arrive." It turned out that Ganesh Manji was nearby, walking back and forth until the clock struck four. And so he finally did arrive, and we talked. He was very impressed, and he still recalls that meeting. He was a little concerned about protocol; I was not. He had perceived me differently, and my manner at that first meeting impressed him. He found me simple and straightforward, I think. He presented his views, and I mine. He appreciated what I had to say, and even today he says, "You behaved so gently with me that I was humbled. I used to think I had achieved such a lot, that I knew so much."

I had one other person to set right, and that was Dilli Raman Regmi, another difficult person. He was ill, with tubercular adhesion of the intestines, and he was staying at Sarnath. When I met him, he started by saying, "I am sick, I cannot do anything more. Try to get me treated in Calcutta." I said, "Okay, I will make arrangements in Calcutta."

He seemed to have known Rajendra Babu. An interim government was running the country and Dr Ghosh was the chief minister of Bengal. I took Dilli Raman Regmi to Rajendra Babu, who was the food minister in the interim government. Jawaharlalji was vice-chairman and Mountbatten was chairman of the council of ministers. Rajendra Babu was visiting Sadakat Ashram in Patna, and I approached him, saying, "He is sick, and we have to get him treated in Calcutta." Rajendra Babu said that he would speak to Dilli Raman Regmi separately for a while, and he did so. I learnt later that Rajendra Babu had asked him whether he needed money. He had said, "Yes," which was why he had felt awkward talking about it in

front of me. I do not know if this should be mentioned in any record or not. Rajendra Babu made some funds available and wrote a letter to Dr Bidhan Chandra Ray and Bengal's Chief Minister Ghosh. Dilli Raman Regmi went to Calcutta and returned cured.

12

The talk was now about organising a political conference. Dr Rammanohar Lohia was an expert at publicity, and he advised me on the statements to put out, the kind of publicity campaign we must conduct, calling the press, and so on. The conference was confirmed for Calcutta. Dr Lohia said, "I will also come. Send me an invitation." I had also met and talked to others. For example, I had had a nice chat with Jawaharlalji's younger sister, Vijayalaxmi Pandit, then a minister in UP. Of course, I met Acharya Narendra Dev and Jayaprakashji, Rammanohar Lohia, and so on. I had written to them all to wish us well and to try to attend the Calcutta conference.

The attendance at the conference was very low. People did come from Nepal, but not to the venue. They stayed away because they did not know what kind of people they would meet. For example, this was true of Mahananda Sapkota. Mukti Adhikari came from Pokhara, and some persons from Saptari, but they too did not attend the conference. Only those of us who had come out and were known took part in the conference. In Calcutta, Ganesh Manji was staying at Dev Shanker's. I was staying at a flower merchant's, and I had put Dilli Raman Regmi up with a friend.

And so we met and we began to discuss the name of the organisation and the matter of electing officials. The first difficulty was encountered right there, and I found myself quite unprepared for what was required. Dilli Raman Regmi spoke up and said he had to be chairman. But when we had sat together to recommend a chairman, no one suggested Regmi's name. He had not been able to impress anyone. To begin with, he was always complaining of illness. Naturally, my name was put forward because I was doing all the running around. Ganesh Manji recommended Tanka Prasadji. I, too, felt that this was a good idea and that it would be a sign of goodwill, for he was in jail. Meanwhile, I could serve as acting chairman. I proposed that he should be made chairman, and that was what was decided.

Then the question was who would be secretary. Mahabir Shumshere said he would like to meet Lohia, who was staying with a certain Menon.

I said that was fine. He gave twenty-five thousand rupees to Lohia rather than to us directly. This was significant, but I did not feel the need to worry about it. Perhaps we would have frittered away the money if we had received it directly. Mahabir Shumshere certainly had need to increase his contacts with the leaders of India, which was probably why he used that procedure.

Subarnaji sent a message saying, "I want to meet BP." He also wanted to meet Jayaprakashji, who happened to be in Calcutta. I was at Marble House, and I said, "Fine, I will have Jayaprakashji over as well." Subarnaji arrived in his car. I remember clearly, watching from an upper floor, how his car was hit by a hand-cart while it was being parked.

We met and spoke on different topics. Subarnaji, too, gave a cheque for twenty-five thousand to Jayaprakashji, saying that it was for the Nepali Congress. I did not like that. I told myself, "They are trying to cosy up to the leaders of India." They were doing this because they knew that India would soon be independent. Whatever the case, at least we now had fifty thousand rupees in our hands.

At about that time, the idea of an Asian Socialist Conference was forming, for there were by now many socialist parties. Burma had one in government, and the socialists were powerful there. In India, too, socialists wielded significant power. The first general election was yet to be held, but it seemed likely that the socialists would come into government. At that time, the socialist movement was also doing well in other places. The Asian Socialist Conference idea was first mooted by Lohia. He told me, "You have to go to Burma to give it shape." I said I would go.

There was no question of my getting a Nepali passport, but the Burmese were nevertheless able to give me a kind of visa. I went to Calcutta, collected an introductory letter given by them and left for Burma. This travel to Burma was only my second international exposure after India, and I met all the top leaders there. The country was going through a very difficult period. Aung San had been killed only recently, and it was a time of crisis. The communists might have taken over at any time. U Nu was prime minister, and U Ba Swe, the defence and home minister, was most powerful. Ne Win was commander-in-chief. I met them all.

After I had explained our programme, they said, "Okay, but we cannot host the Asian socialists at this time because we have to fight the communists. We will host the conference after this crisis is past, for it is a very good idea." Even while I was in Burma, the communists organised a mass rally in which they declared war against the government.

After we had completed discussions on the proposed conference, I put

forward a matter of my own interest. "In Nepal, we are preparing for a fight, an armed rebellion. Can you help us?" A man named U Hwa Aung, who later became ambassador to China, was present. He was trying to organise the foreign department of his country for the first time, and had been named its head. After hearing me out, he called in several of his companions, who included Ne Win, a man named U Hla Aung and a few others. U Ko Ko was the chairman. They told me, "We are ready to give you weapons. What kind do you want?"

Now, I had no idea of the nature of the arms we needed. They said, "We cannot give you too many weapons. We will give you a small token number, the rest we can sell you at cost price." As we discussed the possibilities of arming the Nepali Congress, they suggested calling in the commander-in-chief and some others to advise. Then U Ba Swe called in some very important persons, U Hwa Aung and Ba Sway. What kind of weapons did I want, they too asked me. Of course, I had no knowledge of weaponry. They then took me to a basement and showed me some samples. I said, "We need light weaponry. I will send over someone who understands these things better than I do. I was only here to discuss the possibility."

They reassured me that our revolutionary struggle would have their full support. I do not recall the dates of my Burma visit, and it will be important to check the chronology of my recollections. The Calcutta conference, meanwhile, brought the Nepali National Congress (the *Benaras-wallahs*) and the Nepali Democratic Congress (the Calcutta group) together under one umbrella as the Nepali Congress. I became its acting president. However, I retained some responsibilities towards the Socialist Party, in which I served as in-charge of the student wing. This responsibility had to be fulfilled. However, I had decided to get out of all these obligations and to devote myself to the politics of Nepal.

My task in the Socialist Party had been to try to bridge the gaps among the student groups. For that I had been to Lahore, where I also got involved in a conflict. Some who did not understand me had even protested. Purnima Banerji, the younger sister of Aruna Asaf Ali, had even accused the leadership of sending a student to resolve a conflict, but Jayaprakash supported me. Thereafter, I also had to finish some work in Bihar, which I did. I went around bidding goodbye to all.

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The movement in Biratnagar began about then, around March 1947. The Nepali National Congress was established on 25 January, and the action started in March. That movement was led by Girija and was meant to gain some rights for labourers. The labourers there had no rights whatsoever, so the mill owners were able to do as they pleased. Girija and the others worked as clerks in the jute mill, where they found two or three people exploiting the labourers very badly. Living conditions were poor, with no supply of water in the quarters. The demands put forward by the strikers included the right to form a trade union. That strike was completely devoted to the rights and welfare of labourers, but it was also true that this was the first-ever political action on Nepali soil. It shook the whole country, and led to welcome reactions from all over. The government and the mill owners became one, while on the other side the public showed great support for the labourers. I got a telegram asking that I come, for the action was really political in nature.

The National Congress gave its full support to the movement, and not only because it was a politically significant event, with five to seven thousand workers participating. This was the first-ever open challenge to the government on Nepali soil. People came in from the villages to show support. Five to seven thousand striking workers had to be fed, and the public came up with rice, *daal*, money. And so the strike continued. Padma Shumshere was the prime minister. General Ram Shumshere was the governor based in Biratnagar.

Manmohan Adhikari said he would speak on behalf of the communists. That was when the communist party first appeared on the scene. I feel the need to say this because the communist party was not born later: it came up simultaneously with the Congress party. India's Communist Party also gave full backing to Manmohan. For example, Maila Bajey from Darjeeling, who later became a member of India's parliament, also came and spoke at the Biratnagar strike. The Nepali Congress had the support of the socialists of India, but no senior leader came.

It seemed that the Rana government was mired in confusion. It was taking no action, doing nothing at all. Meanwhile, we were continuing with our demonstrations and speeches. The word was spreading throughout the villages—it seemed as if the whole country was agitated. Then, finally, the government deployed the army and it became clear why the government had waited so long. Everyone was rounded up the morning after the soldiers arrived. Tarini and Girija were arrested; then, it

was my turn. I had been planning to picket at the main gate of the jute mill in the morning. Thuldaju had left Biratnagar at that time for Jogbani. It was the hot summer season when we were taken, about March-April.

After our arrest, we were taken before the governor. We were made to sit on the lawn in the yard while the governor tried to establish contact with Kathmandu on the wireless set so that he could receive instructions about what to do with us. He did not dare make his own decisions. There were six of us: me, Girija, Tarini, Biku, Maheshwar and Yuvaraj. They kept us there for four hours, without water or tea. The governor did not come to meet us. Then Hadraj, who was there, brought a jug full of tea. That was the first time I met Hadraj.

Thereafter, a platoon of armed soldiers marched us to Phusre in the hills to the north, where there was a *kathgodam*, a lumber warehouse. We were kept there. I think Dirgharaj happened to be there, and he bought us fruits, biscuits, tea and canned milk. We left early the next day after morning tea, as it would take a full day to reach Dhankuta. None of us was used to hill walking. Around midway, I felt quite tired. As for Yuvaraj, he fainted.

There used to be a mint near the governor's residence in Dhankuta, and we noticed the large metal presses. We were kept in one of the rooms there. Towards the front, there was a toilet shack. The mint was conveniently located in the bazaar. The government's attitude towards us was not yet clear. They told us not to talk to each other, but we were able to communicate freely. It was quite an exciting time.

Our movement had received considerable publicity within Nepal as well as in India.

Meanwhile, the government had not yet decided what to do with our movement. Our plan had been to continue our actions. Thuldaju went away and did not return to Nepal until the Rana regime ended. Ganesh Manji had arrived in Biratnagar while I was still there. He would come to Biratnagar every day. I said, "Ganesh Manji, don't walk around like this. As it is, you are an escapee from jail." Gopalji, Bal Chandra, our general secretary, all of them were also present. They apparently organised a meeting and were arrested at it. Meanwhile, after we had been sent off to Dhankuta, many members of our family were also taken into custody. Mother, my sisters-in-law and others, all were sent to Dhankuta. But there was not enough space for everyone in Dhankuta, so the day they were to arrive, we were sent off on the trail to Kathmandu. They were to arrive in the evening, and we marched that very morning. Mother, Indira and Nalini were kept in the same place where we had stayed in Dhankuta. There

were two rooms, one for men and the other for women.

They took us to Kathmandu by the hill route, not along the Tarai plains. This meant that wherever we went, crowds gathered to look at us. When we camped, the people would gather and listen to our talk. The major in charge of our group was a man who enjoyed life. This transport of prisoners to Kathmandu was part of his regular duty, and at all the night-halts along the way, it seemed, he had "married" a local lass. He did not take his wives home with him; they remained in their own parents' homes. And so, he would always arrange to end up for the night at an in-law's. When I pressed him he would reply, "Sir, where else would I put up people like you?"

There was an old captain in our group who taught me quite a few things during that extended hike. For example, he told me how to walk the trail. "Walking too fast, one only gets tired," he said. Once, he pointed to a village some distance away, and said, "We'll have lunch there." I asked, "When will we get there?" He replied, "It will take a morning if you go slowly, but all day if you try to rush." That was quite true, for you were steady when you walked slowly, whereas walking fast, one rested often.

At that time, there was a famous mountaineer named Eric Shipton, who had gone on an expedition to Sagarmatha (Mt Everest). We met him along the way, and he too instructed me on how to walk the mountain trails. He said, "If you do not rush, and walk slowly, quite naturally your breathing and your steps will become coordinated. This makes walking easy. You spoil your pace and get tired when you walk too fast and stop often." Keeping this instruction in mind, whenever I walked the hills thereafter, I stopped when I had to, and otherwise just kept walking steadily on.

That journey of ours to Kathmandu across the hills also gave us an opportunity to introduce our political party to the people. We were able to place our ideas before the locals. They used to come to us with yogurt straight from the wooden *thekis* as a form of greeting. We were accustomed to yogurt from the plains, and this hill concoction was so pungent it was hard to swallow. They also brought us fruits like guavas from their family groves.

There were six porters assigned to us, one per prisoner, and there were about 12-15 soldiers accompanying us. It was quite a sight when all of us hit the trail together, and quite naturally we drew attention. The locals, meanwhile, worried that if such a large entourage camped near their village, it would have to be fed. We insisted that because the money for our

transport had been sanctioned, the villagers be paid for all that we consumed.

We also learnt of the extent of poverty in the hills. Vegetables were rare, and we either had meat and rice, or salt and rice. In a few places, you would find them using fern stalks as a vegetable. In many villages, I remember Rumjhatar in particular, they used to ask what they should do and we used to present our case. I also remember staying a night at a Gurung woman's place. She showed us as much affection as if we were her sons.

We arrived in Kathmandu after three weeks. We could have done it in 15 days had we walked quicker, but we had kept a slow pace. Those three weeks created quite a political impact in the hills as far as our party was concerned. Earlier, our contacts had all been in the plains. The soldiers who guarded us along the way were also quite impressed with us, and we developed a kind of friendship with them. We walked together, enjoying each other's company.

We saw great poverty along the way, and this served as the background for our deliberations on economic strategies. As we discussed the economic aspects of our political movement, my own socialist convictions became quite apparent. The others also had the opportunity to present their own perspectives.

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They kept us in Banepa before we reached Kathmandu. There is a small river there and after crossing it you come to a resthouse. We bathed and had a meal, and then we were brought to the resthouse in Baneswar, which was a very old structure. The place where traffic police officers stand today used to be known as Baneswar Pati. We were kept there, and we said, "Why are you not taking us to Kathmandu where you are supposed to take us?" They replied, "We do as we are told."

We were to be produced before Padma Shumshere the next day after the morning meal. Word of our arrival had gone around the town, and so students came by to meet us and wanted to know whether we could address a gathering. They said, "They are planning to take you via Battispatali. Please ask them to take you via Dilli Bazaar instead, past the Charkhal Adda, and we will be gathered there. Plan to be there after the morning meal, when students are headed for classes. Try not to go in the early morning." And so when the soldiers tried to get us moving the next

morning as soon as dawn broke, we insisted that we would go only after a full meal. There was an exchange of messages, but they were able to get us started along the Battisputali route only after we had eaten.

I said, "We will not go this way, we prefer the Dilli Bazaar road." They tried to convince us, but we were adamant. Perhaps they had been directed not to be too rough with us. They talked among themselves and then, at about ten o'clock, they took us by way of Dilli Bazaar and soon we were near Charkhal Adda. People were walking about fearfully. Even those who knew us pretended not to recognize us. In April's heat, they took us to Bishalnagar Darbar and left us standing outside next to a *kapur* tree by the darbar gates. It was noontime and people were milling about. Our belongings were gathered in one pile on the ground. The people, including the students, were standing a little distance away from us. It was clear how fearful the populace had become, for even acquaintances were not willing to come close and talk to us.

I asked, "How long are you going to leave us here in the sun?" The gatekeeper standing near to me replied, "Do you think jailbirds get to have the Maharaja's doors open as soon as they arrive?" He used some foul language, and I responded by slapping him a couple of times. In fact, I was so angry I reached down to pick up a walking stick that was attached to my suitcase, wanting to beat him up. But Manmohan stopped me and held the stick. The man himself was speechless. The bystanders gathered some courage once they saw a prisoner brazenly hit the prime minister's guard. They came a little closer, and I asked them, "What are you watching? Why have you come?"

They said in response, "We want your guidance."

I replied, "Come closer if you want to talk." They crowded around even as the soldiers at the gate looked on.

It turned out there was a meeting underway inside. Mohan Shumshere was also there, consulting with the prime minister about whether or not we should be locked up, and what else could be done with us. Padma Shumshere, the prime minister, favoured leniency, while Mohan Shumshere was for severe punishment. Before long, they heard that I had hit a guard, and Mohan Shumshere got very angry. He said, "That man who has attacked our guard in front of everyone must be locked up and whipped."

Padma Shumshere was put in a spot. He suggested that they first try to find out what had happened and see who had been at fault. To investigate, he sent an old trusted captain, who reported that I had not really hit the guard, only pushed him a bit when the guard had been rude. They were

also told that I was delivering a speech. After a while, the prime minister's *aide de camp* arrived to say that it was time for us to have tea and snacks. I was still speaking before the students, and he turned to them and said, "You have heard, now go."

The body of guards was kept next to the palace, and it was about five thousand strong. The soldiers did not fit in one building and had spilled over to another building next door. It was in the attic of that adjacent building that we were kept. We were served first-class food on British crockery. The milk was very tasty, and the meat was sent over from the *darbar* itself. The cook assigned to us was very competent. We were even sent some good cotton quilts to ward off the cold. We did not, therefore, suffer from physical discomfort, but it was frustrating not to be in contact with the outside.

One day, Surya Prasad Upadhyaya arrived, masquerading as a doctor. Mahendra Prasad, who was Padma Shumshere's doctor, used to come and now Surya Prasad came as his assistant. Because his father had served Bhim Shumshere, he had some kind of link with Padma Shumshere as well. After informing us that Padma Shumshere was not in a position to do anything, Surya Prasad told us that he himself was going to India and asked me for a note of introduction to Jayaprakashji. Manmohan restrained me from writing the note, saying, "We do not know this man, and he may misuse your letter. After all, he is a *darbar* man. Do not send your letter to Jayaprakashji with him." Manmohan insisted, and in the end I thought he was right. So I told Surya Babu, "I may write it in a couple of days." After that he did not return, but he did go to India.

While in that building, we got a sense that the students were up to something. Once, they demonstrated nearby and we could see many goings and comings at Padma Shumshere's *darbar*. Kaiser Shumshere arrived, and then Mohan Shumshere came in his red Mercedes Benz even as the students were shouting slogans. It was the same kind of car that Hitler used to ride in, and its passage was blocked by the demonstration. I was speaking to the students. His guards shoved the students aside to let the car through and then started beating them up very badly. I said to them, "Why are you hitting the students? If you must, take action against me. All they are doing is listening to me." That had no effect, and the students fled.

After that incident, they tried to move us to a different place. We were, after all, on the main road to the *darbar*. But there was no other suitable place and they could not put us in a jail. On the road to Nakkhu, to the south of Narayan Shumshere's residence, there was a nice building meant

for Juddha Shumshere's daughter. They emptied a wing at the back and moved the six of us there. The arrangements were fine. As far as food was concerned, everything was provided by the kitchen, including milk and tinned biscuits. Shoes, jackets, overcoats, and whatever else we needed were also available. There was a call button to summon the soldiers. However, we were not allowed to go beyond the courtyard, nor were we allowed visitors. Sometimes from afar we could recognise people headed for the Dakshinkali shrine. We used to see Dirgharaj and others go by, but of course could not meet them.

For some reason, while in detention, I developed an unreasonable temper. One day, during lunchtime I noticed that my plate had not been properly washed. I shouted angrily at a captain standing nearby, "How can you serve us on such dirty plates!" and then threw the plate on the ground. It fell toward the captain, and the food splattered, some of it on his uniform. He got very angry, naturally, for it had happened in front of his juniors. I had not meant to embarrass him. Fortunately, the matter did not go further.

For the smokers among us, the best cigarettes of the day, Du Mourier, were available, as many as required. Some had started smoking 50 a day, and I suggested that a limit of 20 be set. I myself needed only two, one each after the morning and evening meals. Tarini said, "Why is Sandaju trying to put a limit to what we are getting?"

We had arranged to take turns making tea, and when it was Manmohan's turn he invariably spoilt it. Sometimes he would cut himself in the kitchen and be holding his bloody finger as he brought in the tray. He was someone who could neither make good tea nor take good care of himself. He was completely unreliable about anything he had to do. But he was very personable company.

We were getting along well in the bungalow. I encouraged my colleagues to read and write. We had started receiving books from our sympathisers in India. Rajendra Babu sent me a book, *India Divided*, signed as a gift. Jayaprakashji and others also sent me books. Our jailer had a somewhat modern outlook, and he made the newspapers available to us. Indeed, we were well taken care of.

My throat troubles started again, and I fell ill. Everyone was worried, including the leaders in India. Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Balchandra Sharma went to Gandhi to gain his sympathy. Rammanohar Lohia was also actively seeking my release. Gandhi wrote to Padma Shumshere urging my release, and the papers said that Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Balchandra Sharma were headed for Nepal with the letter. As soon

as the authorities read the news they released me, even before the letter was received. However, Padma Shumshere told me later, "I did not release you because of Gandhiji's note. I released you myself."

Once out of detention, I went to India for treatment, but my five friends remained in jail. No sooner had I left Nepal than I started my work within the party. Then the tussle for leadership began.

15

My father was a non-conformist in the true sense. He was religious, but not given to rituals. He was progressive. Truth be told, he was quite revolutionary in his thinking. His view was that a politician should not limit himself to politics, but should also understand education and the many other aspects of social life. Somehow, his views were akin to those of Gandhiji's. Actually, in later life even his face had begun to resemble Gandhiji's. The same facial features, the same attitude, and he even used to sit cross-legged.

I remember a few events relating to Father. I have, of course, already related his relationship with Chandra Shumshere while in exile, and how he used to receive books and medicine. My father was also very keen that the *kamara* system of slavery, very prevalent in Nepal back then, be ended. Our family itself had quite a few *kamara-kamari*, and even today I remember some of them. They used to serve Father, and some of them really loved him and he, too, returned that devotion. I vaguely remember a *kamari*, her name was Indrabadan. It seemed to me their biggest sadness was that, while they looked after us, they did not have a family life of their own.

So, Father was constantly writing to Chandra Shumshere, urging him to end this system of slavery. I think it was around 1924 that Chandra Shumshere decided to free the slaves. He wrote to Father through Kaji Ratnaman, asking what he thought about the emancipation. That was the kind of relationship Chandra Shumshere maintained with my father. He wanted Father to return to Nepal but wanted him to come back chastened.

I remember one touching incident about Father. We were still in Benaras, not yet gone to Tedhi. I had developed a rather large abscess on my bottom. We used to follow homeopathic treatments, which was cheap, but homeopathy did not improve my condition and I began to find it difficult even to walk about. I had a well-built nephew, Avinash, who

carried me to a doctor in Godaulia, who prescribed some medicine. Upon returning home, I became very ill with a high temperature. The swelling became larger, and it became necessary to see a doctor again, but we did not have the money for his fee.

Father had a friend who said he would take care of the costs. A civil surgeon arrived and said he would have to operate within 24 hours or the infection would spread dangerously. I would have to be anaesthetised, which would cost about 75 rupees. We had managed the doctor's fees, but now this amount for the anaesthesia had to be raised. Mother and grandmother were discussing the matter when I piped up and said there was no need to put me to sleep. I could manage without anaesthesia.

The procedure was carried out at home, and about a potty-full of pus and blood was drained. It hurt a lot, and I nearly fainted. I managed somehow while the operation was on, but it became hard to control myself when they began dressing the wound. All who were standing around tried to give me strength by repeating how brave I was and so on. Someone was checking my pulse. It was with great fortitude that I got through that operation. I remember the doctor saying as he departed, that he had not seen a braver child. I wonder if he realised how much I was hurting.

Thereafter, a compounder used to come to change the dressings, and those were moments of immense pain for me. Those were backward times, when dressings used to hurt very badly and I suffered. I had been told not to move my legs, and everyone used to admire my ability to deal with pain. A few times I nearly lost consciousness, and saw only black. Over time, it seemed that the sore was healing, but it turned out that that was only on the outside. We were at the Thatheri Bazaar house, and in the next room was a sick man who had taken to sending me some of the fruit he received. Meanwhile, I continued to hurt.

Father had gone to Calcutta in search of work at that time, and Mother was in Benaras. I wanted to see Calcutta and so I asked Mother if I could go and she agreed. There was a Newar jeweller my father was friendly with who travelled to Calcutta and Bombay on business. I forget his name, but he helped us later on as well. He had come to Benaras, and was willing to buy my train ticket and take me to Calcutta. And so that was what we did.

In Calcutta, my father was staying at the house of a poet, Subba Taranath. He had links to the big palaces in Nepal, and he used to act as a go-between for marriages between them and India's royalties. He lived on the commission he made from making these matches. Subba Taranath had two wives; the elder one seemed a bit unwell. The younger wife was

pretty and had a pleasant personality. She was, however, treated like a servant. The senior wife would drink freshly squeezed fruit juice from silver bowls, while the junior wife spent all her time in the kitchen.

Our train arrived at Howrah Station at night, and my guide asked me for the house number. I remembered the name of the street but not the house number. As he started getting angry, I thought I might even forget the street name. Somehow we had to find the place, so we left in a taxi. Once we got to the locality, I got out of the taxi and walked from one end of the street to the other, shouting "Father! Father!" My surprised father actually heard me, and opened the window. He saw us while we were backtracking on the street, opened the door and took me in.

In Calcutta, I found my father living under difficult circumstances. He was a hawker, and walked around with a tray that displayed all kinds of wares. This tray was attached to a strap that went around his neck, and Father walked the footpaths shouting "*Do-do paisay!*" At other times, he hung various items from his arms like garlands and sold them along the footpaths and on the Calcutta trams. He slipped in and out of the trams, selling these items. Whatever he earned was from this hawking of wares on the streets. That was his situation, and I have always remembered this as an example of his grit.

Father started schooling me once I arrived. Meanwhile, there remained the challenge of my treatment. He was in touch with the Indian National Congress, and Chittaranjan Das had opened a dispensary within his own compound. This was the beginning of the Chittaranjan Seva Sadan, which today is a well-known cancer institute in Calcutta. Father knew Chittaranjan Das, and so took me to him. I remember clearly that house of old Bangla design standing on a large plinth. There was an easy chair made of wickerwork, the kind that is most difficult to use because you can neither sit nor sleep. Mr Das was reclining on one of those. We arrived in the morning. After talking to my father, he called in a doctor who examined me and said there was pus inside. He stuck a syringe into my wound and it hurt immensely. He then said, "This has not healed and we have to do a small operation. I will open the wound and make it heal properly."

Chittaranjan Das gave me some fruit and said, "My compounder will visit you to do the dressings." But there was still the problem of returning to our lodgings, about four miles to the north. Given my condition, there was no question of taking a tram. I was shivering with pain, and to use one of those hand-drawn rickshaws with tinkling bells would not do either. Somehow, we did make it home that day. The compounder came by many times to do my dressings, but he would not take payment.

And so Father started to teach me. Because there no money for paper, we used newspapers bought by Taranath or sometimes by Father. We used to cut the papers to copy-size, line them and write in large letters. Father had me write 32 pages every day. There was nothing else for me to do, so all day long he would make me write. He would say, I will take you out after you finish your writing. And when we did go out anywhere in Calcutta, it was always walking. My father was living in very difficult circumstances.

One day, I learnt later, my father had actually come close to despair. There was a famous Kali temple near where we were staying, Thanthaniya Kali they called it. He went there early in the morning one day. He had a bright and radiant face, and had put a black and red *tika* on his forehead. There in the temple, he was standing alone, and in his strong voice he was reciting verses to Durga-Kali. Someone was observing him, and after my father was done this person came over and, holding him by the hand, said to my father, "You recite such good Sanskrit verses. Who are you? It is obvious that you are suffering."

"I am from Nepal," Father replied.

The man said, "I sensed both compassion and pathos in your voice. Tell me, why do you grieve?"

The man took Father to his house in a locality called Simla Street, which was near to where we were. He turned out to be the younger brother of Swami Vivekananda; I have forgotten his name. He was quite famous as a militant leader and he invited my father to join his group. Father had already got to know a little about such matters although he had not himself engaged in any militancy. They told him, "You are not known around here, so it will be easy for you to transport literature and materials from the Kidderpore Docks to our headquarters. You do not have to do anything else." Father did join the group for a period, when I was in Calcutta. It was a militant organisation known by the name Anushilan ('discipline'). Later, he took up jobs that were even more perilous. There was a party started by the Sikhs of Canada named Gadhar ('mutiny') which was much talked about at the time. My father was involved in transporting literature and arms for them.

I was very much affected by Father's activities during that period. He was in such difficult circumstances, working as a street hawker, yet maintaining such high ideals. In the end, the same gentleman told my father, "I am holding on to some money for my sister's son, which will be required at the time of his marriage. He is presently in Orissa. You take this money and buy a little plot of land in his name. In the meantime, you

may cultivate the land and keep the income." He gave Father some money, and that is how we moved to Tedhi from Benaras.

Those were indeed difficult times. I sold newspapers, and often went hungry. But I was not affected mentally by our circumstances. Thinking back, that period even seems audaciously romantic. I did not experience great tension, but our condition had an effect on Thuldaju, on his character.

Sometimes, my father would say, "Today, I'll take you to Chorbazaar." That's a market where you can get everything. We did not have the money to visit the zoo. There was a man named Rameswar Daju, who once came in great style in an automobile and said, "Come, let's go to the zoo!" The ticket was one *anna* per person, and I remember we went in a taxi. I had an upset tummy that day, but I could hardly reveal it as they might have left me behind. So I got into the taxi headed for the zoo, but could not hold back and let myself go. I remember washing up at the pond in the zoo and then seeing the animals.

The two wives of the poet Taranath liked me a lot and competed for my attention, I remember. The younger wife, confined to the kitchen, used to hide goodies for me. Because I used to have upset tummies regularly, my *dhoti* was often soiled, and she would clean it as well. The senior wife, who was sickly, seemed a bit resentful of this. In her turn, she would peel fruit and feed me. They used to hug me and hold me close, both those ladies, who really showered me with affection.

That is what I remember most of that time in Calcutta, notwithstanding the wants and difficulties. I do not recall the difficulties so much, but I remember well the love I received. The two ladies wept openly when it was time for me to leave Calcutta. They hugged and kissed me on the cheek. That was not the first time, to be sure. Before that, too, I had once been the object of such motherly affection. I still wonder at the enormous amount of love those two women gave me, a child of nine or ten.

16

I will now recount another incident, one that you could say shows our family in a bad light. But it is another event that left an impression on me.

My father was the youngest brother. Before him was my second uncle, the immediate younger brother of Kalidas Sardar. He had married three or four times, once with a Bahuni, another time with a Newarni, and then with a Chhetrini. Lastly, he had married an extremely beautiful woman,

another Bahuni. She was the daughter of Laxmikanta Sharma, Nepal's greatest *tantrik* who was also well known in Calcutta. Chandra Shumshere had exiled him, believing that the man's *tantra* would harm him. That was why he was in Calcutta, living in a three-storeyed house on Simla Street with a large compound and a garden full of flowers. The girl my uncle married was from Laxmikanta Sharma's Bahuni spouse. Laxmikanta had another daughter, elder to her, from his Newarni spouse. This elder sister, together with her husband, stayed with Laxmikanta in the house on Simla Street.

All this had happened just before Chandra Shumshere ousted our family from Nepal. My aunt, it turned out, did not want to live with my second uncle. The only person with whom she could really communicate was my father. "What a mismatch!" she apparently used to say about her own marriage. Uncle, after all, was an old man and she was still in her youth. She would share her sadness with my father, who she found sympathetic. At about the time we came out to India, she ran away and returned to her father Laxmikanta's house in Calcutta; this turned out to be a matter of great indignity for my uncle. There have been other such unfortunate episodes in our family, of course.

Uncle wrote an emotional letter to Father, asking him to try and convince my young aunt to return home from Calcutta. But by then she, my aunt, was already cohabiting with the man who was married to her elder sister, Laxmikanta's daughter from the Newarni side. After receiving the letter, my father went to meet his sister-in-law in Simla Street. He also took me along, saying it was to meet the great *tantrik*. Father did not like the assignment one bit, but he felt he had to go and at least try to do his elder brother's bidding.

So, I went along, and saw that in the house there was a great *baithak*, a drawing room. There were musical instruments, a *tanpura*, *tabla* and *sarangi*, and a nice set of cushions along the walls. There were bolsters, the kind you see where there is song and dance. After we were seated there, my father said, "I would like to meet *bhauju*."

Her mother replied, "Your *bhauju* is not going back to anyone's home."

Father replied, "Please let me meet her, just once."

"Of course you can meet her. She remembers you often, and says the only reason she felt sorry to leave was Sanbabu."

A little later, my aunt came in alone, entering from an inner door to the *baithak*. She had a pretty, rounded face, and had a white *dhoti* and *chappals* on. She spotted me and asked, "Who is this?"

"Bishweshwar, don't you recognise him?" Father asked.

“Oh my! He’s grown so big!” she exclaimed. Hugging me, she put me next to her on the cushion.

She then asked about how things were at home, and Father described everything. She said, “I will not go back. I have left him, and have now chosen my partner. I am living with my elder sister’s husband, and find this more self-respectful than remaining a wife to someone forcefully. That, I consider adultery, *byavichar*, whereas here I have voluntarily accepted my sister’s husband as my own. This is much more respectful for a woman than to suffer through a forced marriage.”

I was hit hard by that episode. *Byavichar* means to live unwillingly with someone, at least that was her definition of the term. My father was left speechless, and he had no answer. She continued, “Tell him to forget me, to erase me from memory. I did find love in that household; everyone was kind to me. Please come visit me as long as you are here, and leave Bishweshwar with me for a week.”

There was nothing more left to do, so my father said, “I will leave now.” I too got up, but she held on to my hand, “Won’t you stay with me?” She made me sit and added, “You can go whenever you want.” Our place was only about five minutes away from her house. I stayed there with her, and got a lot of love and respect.

In Calcutta, we were living like the poor, surviving on 2-4 paisa a day and on the love of Taranath’s two wives. Here at my aunt’s, meals included two varieties of *daal*, meat and fish, and dishes of all kinds. Laxmikanta’s son-in-law was a great singer, it turned out, and he had also trained his wife in music. Great soirees were organised there in the *baithak*, and my aunt would caution me, “Don’t go in there.”

But of course one knew who was coming there and what was happening. The great *tanpuras* all wrapped up in red and the other musical instruments that bedecked that *baithak*—it was the setting for *mujra*. The singer son-in-law later moved to Bombay. Ganesh Manji told me about this, for he recognised the family. Ganesh Manji also said that he had a son from his Bahuni wife and that they became great singers in Bombay. I think the son-in-law died about the time I went to Bombay after being released from jail in 1968. His son contacted me and said he would come and see me, but he did not. Ganesh Manji knows everything about that family.

I remember all this, and also very much what my young aunt had to say. I was very impressed with her insight that it was adultery if one cohabited with one’s husband unwillingly. She, too, showed me great affection, like Taranath’s wives. My aunt made me clothes, and she would

come home and give me oil massages. She just had to hug me and my whole body would be full of fragrance. There was also a bit of the *mujra* life about her. She gave me two shawls.

After that, we came to Tedhi.

In Tedhi, I encountered another family character. She was the daughter of that same second uncle, either from his Chhetrini or his Newami wife. We used to call her Sahili Didi, and she had been married off to a man in some village in West Nepal. For someone who had grown up unfettered, she had had a difficult life there. Once when some bandits raided her house, the residents all fled. She, however, picked up a sword and confronted the bandits. The thieves stripped her, but not before she had bloodied some of them. When her husband came back, she told him, "Coward, leaving a woman to fight bandits." The husband responded in anger, "Why did you have to do it? See how they shamed you!" They had an altercation, and Sahili Didi said, "It was I who fought them, and you all did nothing."

Later, while travelling towards Biratnagar with her husband, she got off the train at Sonapur station in the middle of the night. She left her husband on the train, but had no place to go once she got off. She headed for Patna. On the way, while crossing the Ganga on the steamer ferry, she met a lawyer from Arrah who took her with him. Soon after, my father got a letter from my second uncle, saying that his daughter had run away and asking if he could please help find her. But by that time we had received a communication from her saying that she was fine and that we should not worry. We sent Babusaheb to get her, and she arrived ten or fifteen days after she had disappeared. However, we never found out how she had fared during that period or with whom she had lived. Whenever the subject of the lawyer from Arrah arose, and what he was like, Sahili Didi would reply, "Of what importance is that, what he was like and how he treated me?"

I remember her saying, "Would you expect me to suffer my husband's lack of spirit, and stay with that coward? So one man gave me refuge. What business is it of yours to find out how he treated me?" She had the daring to speak in that manner, and Father found this praiseworthy.

Once she was with us, Sahili Didi showed me much affection. I was quite surprised with the amount of caring she showered on me. A few days after she arrived it was the time for the large Singheswar fair. We were going, and I told her, "Do not go anywhere until I return, okay?" She had replied, "My dear, why would I go anywhere leaving you?" But when we returned from the fair after two or three days, she was gone. She left me

soap, oil and some other things, including a shawl. I remember that shawl very well, it was made of fine, raw silk. Sahili Didi also left me a brief note: "I will not be seeing you now. It would have been very hard for me to leave you if you were here, that is why I am departing when you are not around."

As soon as we returned from the fair, I asked, "Where is Sahili Didi?"

"She's gone." As soon as I received that answer, I felt that my world had ended. She loved me so much. I used to wear the shawl she left me, on which there was still the aroma of her scent, and cry. That is the kind of emotional attachment I developed for Sahili Didi. Later, I did meet her, in very distressing circumstances. But I never encountered another woman as courageous as her. All these events contributed to my impression of women later on.

My uncles were old-fashioned, but Father used to maintain a modern attitude about everything, be it religion, relationships, rituals or tradition. I too have always held a modern worldview, which is the result of the various events that overtook my family. This outlook is also due to the women of our family, who would be called immoral from the traditional point of view, but whom I was able to view first-hand. My third aunt, my second aunt who eloped, and Sahili Didi and her secret sojourn—these women forced my standard of judgment about who is immoral and who is not to be entirely different.

17

There is another episode involving my father, which is rather sad and throws further light on his character. The family was scattered all over. I myself was studying in Benaras, doing all right, as was Thuldaju in Patna. From a Bengali doctor, Thuldaju used to receive a stipend of 15 rupees a month, of which he would send me four. Of the remaining 11 rupees, eight rupees went for his mess charge and so on. He would have three rupees left. I was getting two meals a day, so my four rupees went for school fees and books. That is how I managed with the money sent by Thuldaju.

Mother was in Bettiah, with my younger brothers and sisters, living in dire straits. Let me describe the situation. My sister in Bettiah was not married, and neither was my mother's sister, Aunt Kumidini. My brother Harihar, older than Koshu and immediately after me, was also there, along with the others. Sanodai Bodhprasad, Sushila's father, used to sell the newspapers he collected at a bookstall. Meals were comprised only of gruel. I also sold newspapers when visiting Bettiah.

Once, there was a Hindu-Muslim riot. Hari studied at a convent school there, and Sanima and Nalini also attended a similar type of school. The schools were closed for a couple of days following the disturbance, and when they opened, Father said, "You should now go to school." Everyone's reaction was, "But how can you send women outside at such a time?" My father replied, "You will carry a knife. If anyone threatens you, use it on him." The roads were empty, and on it were two lone girls headed for school—pretty girls, with daggers under their belts. Father believed that one should be fearless. But there was also some danger there.

Then there was a cholera epidemic, which attacked my brother Harihar. Father was in Jayanagar, looking for work. We could not provide Harihar with medical care, and he died. There was no way to take him to the cremation *ghats*—we had no money for the shroud to wrap him in or for the firewood. Everyone was in a state of shock. Mother wrote to a Nepali woman married to an Indian living nearby asking for some money to carry out the cremation. The lady arrived with her husband, and we were able to buy the shroud and firewood. When we returned home from the cremation, the couple said, "Why do you stay here under such circumstances? We have relations with the raja of Kolhapur, and he will surely help you. Please do not misunderstand, and do go visit him."

My mother did not want to stay in Bettiah a minute longer. Father was still in Jayanagar. Mother sent him a telegram and the next day the whole household departed. We had no money for the train tickets, and the same lady had to buy them for us. I met her later, in Calcutta, and remember liking her. She paid for the tickets and also wired Father, informing him that his family was coming on such-and-such a train and to meet them in Muzaffarpur. That is how the whole party arrived like a group of gypsies in Muzaffarpur, with a son just expired.

Father arrived from Jayanagar, and he saw everyone but Hari. "So where is Hari?" he asked. Mother was unable to respond, and Father understood immediately. He became silent. Mother then told him of the plan to go to Kolhapur. The family arrived in Benaras and met Grandmother, and then everyone headed for Bombay en route to Kolhapur. That Nepali lady paid for all the expenditures.

My family had no money at all and our clothes were all patched. After greeting them, the maharaja of Kolhapur let them stay in the old palace, which was empty because he had moved into new premises. There was black marble on the floor, and everywhere the soldiers would salute the family whose clothes were in tatters. You could not emerge from the building without inviting a salute. For meals, there were all kinds of fruits,

meats and juice. As Mother would recall, "All night long, I would be washing clothes, ironing and darning them."

The maharaja's elder sister was an unusual lady. At that time, she was living in Kolhapur and actually ruling the state. She got married to the crown prince of Gwalior, who later became king. Father used to recall, "She was the power there. She would arrive on horseback in the mornings, asking us how we were doing, and then go for a hunt. She would return with wild boar, deer, and so on. The biscuits we were provided with were all foreign."

My father was quite taken aback by the whole situation: what was all this, and why was it happening? Meanwhile, the principal of the local college, whose name was Ghorpade, would warn my father, "This maharaja is not a good man." It seemed there was a fight on between the Brahmins and non-Brahmins. Ghorpade was a Brahmin while the maharaja was not. The latter used to promote mass marriages without a *pundit* officiating. Fifty to a hundred couples would be married at one go. Perhaps that was why Ghorpade was very critical of the ruler, making all kinds of accusations.

Father was surprised by the maharaja's hospitality. This mystery was never resolved, but once, when both brother and sister were present, father did ask, "Why are you doing all this for us? What do you get out of it?" The king replied, "It is all in the ego of the Rajput ruler. One ruler tried to do you in, so another tries to protect you. It is all a matter of pride."

"I did not like that argument," Father used to say. So he wanted to leave Kolhapur, but it was difficult because the maharaja would not let him go. He said, "You have to stay here; don't go away. I will arrange for a house for you, arrange for everything. Stay here under my protection." Father replied that he would have to go to Benaras and ask his mother once. The maharaja said, "Perhaps you do not want to stay here. Maybe you do not trust me." His brothers and sister were all listening as he called his dewan over and said, "Bring all your papers, stamps and my *lalmohar* seal. Write down whatever he says, and bring the paper for my signature."

The dewan came with all the paraphernalia required to get the paper ready. They, it seemed, used the *lalmohar* too. The king turned to my father and said, "I will send your second son to England; I will set your elder son up in business in Bombay. I will take care of everyone's studies, *bartamans* and weddings. Whatever else you want, just write it down." And so everything was written and made ready. My father was worried, for only the seal remained to be stamped. He said, "It is not that I do

not trust you. But I have to get permission from my mother. I will go and ask her."

"In which case, you go to your mother, but leave the rest of your family here," said the maharaja. Father replied, "No, they will have to come with me. But we will certainly return." It was then that the maharaja replied, "Now I know you will not return. All these papers are ready, but I know you will not come back. You may go, but if you do change your mind, I will stand by my word."

There were seven hundred dogs kept as pets in that palace. There were dogs all over the place. One had become ill, and it was being sent all the way to Poona for treatment in a special train. A bogey was attached to that special train, and my mother, father and our entire family was sent to Poona on it and from there to Bombay. But when they arrived in Bombay there was not a *paisa* in anyone's pocket.

There was a Newar family in Bombay, Triratna Sahu's, which also did business in Lhasa. They helped us a lot. A couple of others also assisted. They bought train tickets for everyone and sent the family off to Benaras. Once again, when they arrived at our house in Benaras, no one had any money. Father had brought everyone back after a month and a half of regal living. He sent a letter to the maharaja, saying that we were not returning.

That was truly a bizarre episode. Principal Ghorpade had told Father, "This man has an eye out for your daughter or your sister-in-law." That may have been the case, or maybe not.

18

So Father returned to Nepal after Chandra Shumshere died. Upon his return, he opened a school. He had a modern outlook in education, and used to say, "Men and women should receive equal opportunity to study." People opposed that, but he would not change his viewpoint. He also promoted dance and drama. While staging dramas, he would make his own daughter, sister and Sushila dance, and this invited a strong reaction. Our neighbour, a *dittha* (government official) who had been quite helpful to us, said, "Making our daughters dance on stage did not appeal to me." I remember I was there when Father replied, "Forgive me, but we must do it."

Father believed that women must learn to ride bicycles and horses. Those were days when families maintained stables, and we too had a

horse. Sushila, just married, did not know how to ride horses and my father used to send her out in the mornings saying, "Here, take the horse and come back in an hour or two." Thuldaju did not like this and would get quite agitated. Right at the beginning, he said, "I do not like this at all!" Upon hearing this, Sushila felt awkward and did not go. My father came by and asked, "Where is Sushila? Why hasn't she gone?" He then asked her to put on her riding clothes and go out.

That day, Sushila fell off the horse, near the magistrate's mansion. Thuldaju once again got the opportunity to make his point, "This is not nice, for a daughter-in-law to fall off and get mud all over herself." I still remember Father's matter-of-fact response: "Those who ride will fall. It is only those who never leave the ground that never fall."

There was a maxim that Father kept close to his heart, which he had also put under the lid of a nice little trunk he had bought in Calcutta when he was doing well. "You just dare, I shall provide," he had written in the shape of a half-moon, and you would see it as soon as the lid was opened. Father would say that it was god's message, that the person who took the initiative would receive divine help. That was his outlook.

When Bhim Shumshere became prime minister, he asked Father, "How will you settle down? How much money do you need?" My father replied, "You do not have to provide anything. I will do business and make ends meet. Your Highness has allowed me to return, that is gift enough." Bhim Shumshere also respected Father.

Father mulled over what business to start now that he was back in Nepal, and decided to do something new and unusual. He was not keen on the regular trade of grain import and export. There is a medicinal herb, *Rockfair serpentina*, used to treat insanity. It is called *chandmuduwa* around Biratnagar, and I think *sarpasheel* in Sanskrit. A Bengali who dealt with medications for treating dementia had told Father, "I will buy the herb if you are able to supply it." The plant was found at the base of the hills, not in the high mountains. It was once abundant around the Chhota Nagpur area, but had been depleted through over-harvesting, which was why all eyes were on our region. Father decided that this is what he would export.

That particular herb was not in the list of items for which customs duty had been set, so Father could have simply shipped it out without paying a *paisa*. No one would have been any wiser. However, he thought that would have been improper and so he informed the prime minister and had the herb included in the list. He promised to pay three rupees a maund as duty. He would buy the stock at 24 rupees per *maund*, and export a total of about 1000 *maund* a year. We used to make about 10-12

thousand rupees a year after expenses from that trade.

After that, my father got into the mining of *rupamukhi* and *sunamukhi*, but in this we suffered huge losses. We spent a lot in preparing for the mining, but at that very time vast deposits of the same item were discovered in Russia, and our market collapsed. In describing all this, I am trying to indicate how my father was always interested in new and unusual ventures. He took nothing from Bhim Shumshere, and was confident in his status, saying, "With him as prime minister, I will be able to run my affairs."

My second uncle died. He had no one surviving him, and he left some property, including the house in which we live in Biratnagar today. However, he also left a lot of debts. In any event, my father's financial status gradually improved.

Bhim Shumshere died after two and a half years, and Juddha Shumshere took his place. Father had never met the new prime minister and did not know him. The system in those days was for the new prime minister to sideline or remove those who had been close to his predecessor. So Father was wondering what Juddha Shumshere would do. The cases brought against him in court had not yet been disposed of, and for more than two years Father had not bothered about them. So he was a little concerned, This was about the time that Bunu was born.

It was already 20 or 21 days since Juddha Shumshere had ascended to his high office, and my father had not gone to pay his respects as a courtier. Juddha Shumshere seemed to have noted Father's absence and so he sent his guards to call him. Mother told us that when that order came she felt Father would never return. Indeed, when he put on his clothes and left the house, he believed that he would be heading straight to jail from the prime minister's residence.

Juddha Shumshere was still in Jawalakhel then, and he was walking about the garden when Father arrived. When he was announced, the prime minister asked him to be brought forward. Some sardar escorted him over and Juddha Shumshere said, "Why did you not come to see me after I became prime minister?" Father said, "I did not know Your Highness, nor had I served as your courtier. That is why I was not able to come."

"Now that I have become prime minister, what do you think I will do?" Father was, after all, a reformist, and he recalled later that it was as if god himself was urging him to speak his mind at that point in answer to that question. So he said, "Your Highness, what have the prime ministers done to date? Neglected the country and only made arrangements for

their sons and for their grand palaces. And today, the public is fearful because Your Highness has 21 sons. Now, sir, the public will lose everything it has." My father continued in this vein, and Juddha Shumshere kept on listening. Father said later, "I do not know what got into me and gave me that courage, but that is what I said."

Juddha Shumshere sat down heavily on a chair there in the garden, turned to Father, and said, "You may be right. This may be what everyone is thinking, but that is not what I will do. Yes, I have my sons, and I will arrange for them, but I will build them simple houses rather than large palaces. As for freehold government land, I will not even contemplate appropriating it. What you say may reflect the fears of the public, of my subjects, but I will chart a different course." Father replied, "Such words from the prime minister is a harbinger of glad tidings for the country. And I do hope that this is what Your Highness will do. The people will then be at peace during your reign."

Juddha Shumshere then let my father go. After that, the two never met again, but Juddha Shumshere kept his word. He did not take any government land, and for his sons he built small and simple mansions rather than palaces.

There are several incidents that illustrate Father's relationship with the Ranas. Once while on the road, he fell after being run into by a horse ridden by a courtier of Bhim Shumshere's. When the latter asked him whose horse it was that had hit him, Father replied, "What good will it do if I identify him? It was not intentional. My hurt will not heal if I tattle, but the person will be badly hurt."

Bhim Shumshere's son, Padma Shumshere, once told father, "You are a very cunning man, Krishna Prasad."

It was around the time of Dasai, in autumn, and I was with Father during the holidays. He asked me later, "Is there a difference between 'cunning' and 'clever'?"

I said, "There can be a slight negative connotation to 'cunning'."

Father immediately went back to Padma Shumshere and demanded to know, "Why did you call me 'cunning'? That is not a nice word."

He said, "I did not intend it in the negative sense. What I meant was that you are wise, that you understand things."

My father responded, "But that is 'clever', not 'cunning'."

Padma Shumshere said, "In English, 'clever' and 'cunning' can also be used interchangeably."

But Father would have none of it: "No, 'cunning' is used pejoratively, whereas 'clever' is not."

Padma Shumshere conceded, "I had meant to use it in the sense of 'clever'."

"In which case, I have no problem with it," was my father's reply.

Later, around Dasai time, he had to go there for *tika*. You had to take your shoes off before going upstairs, in order not to dirty the carpets. Father was wearing torn socks, which only the shoes were covering. He could have taken the socks off and gone upstairs, but he also disliked the very idea of being asked to take off shoes. He went upstairs, and told Padma Shumshere, "This custom of removing shoes is not nice. In my case, my shoes were covering up my socks, which are all torn. Next time, I will not come if I have to take off my shoes." At that time Padma Shumshere was either the Eastern or Southern Commanding General.

These are the things that remind me of Father's courage. What he told Juddha Shumshere to his face, in particular, was extraordinary. After that, the Second World War started and during the war Father was put behind bars. He was caught in 1943 in Biratnagar because he had given shelter to revolutionaries from India. Perhaps the British did not like that and therefore had asked that Father be imprisoned. But that is another story.

19

Although I was released during Padma Shumshere's reign, my five jailmates remained in custody. Mother and others had been released after spending six months in the jail in Dhankuta. Immediately upon release, I went to Tata Hospital in Bombay for a medical check-up and it turned out that I already had a large infection requiring treatment. After completing my recovery, I came to our headquarters in Benaras. Matrika Babu (Thuldaju) had become president in my absence. Later, for some reason, he had resigned and our friends had got together and chosen Dilli Raman Regmi to serve in the post.

It turned out that Dilli Raman was not doing any work. There had been some conflict within the organisation during my absence. We had developed an organisational base, particularly in the tarai region, but there was no contact with the field nor was any directive going out. Only statements were being released, and self-glorifying ones at that. Our supporters were quite unhappy and as I came out they said, "You have to take over the work." I was not keen to pick up the responsibility, so I answered, "Let the work proceed, I will certainly contribute."

But because Dilli Raman was creating problems with the party's

operations, no one paid any attention to my protestations. He would not call the Working Committee when asked to, nor would he follow the decisions of the Working Committee. Meanwhile, he made his own contacts and his own decisions. So there was great dissatisfaction among the members, and all friends, including Ganesh Manji said, "Now you must take up the responsibility."

Dilli Raman was not being sociable with the members, and I felt it was necessary to have a heart-to-heart talk with him. He treated party colleagues as if they were servants. He showed some deference to me and would even deign to talk to me, but for the rest he exhibited only disdain. One day, I decided to go talk to him in Benaras. He, of course, never went to anyone. Ganesh Manji happened to be present. Dilli Raman used to call Ganesh Manji just 'Ganesh Man' and there was no question of using 'ji', nor the honorific 'tapai'. And so he said, "Ganesh Man, Bishweshwar Babu has come. Go, bring him some tea."

To his great credit, Ganesh Manji, once he decided to regard someone a leader, would go to any length to support that person. For example, he has washed clothes for Thuldaju, whom he considered a leader. For my part, I used to hold Ganesh Manji in high regard, as a precious colleague. And so, at Dilli Raman's, Ganesh Manji picked up a kettle, went downstairs and brought back some tea. Dilli Raman never used an honorific other than 'ta' or 'timi', that was how he conducted himself.

This was Dilli Raman's strategy: India would help usher in change in the country while he remained chief of the party. He was not bothered about strengthening the organisation. All this was extremely worrying, and I shared my concerns with Dilli Raman. He agreed, and said, "Let us go and have a good talk, you and me." So we went to Company Bagh, but he did not take Ganesh Manji along. There, he pleaded with me, "Let me remain president. After all, how much longer do I have to live? You, on the other hand, have a long life ahead of you."

Now I thought that was being quite dishonest politically. There were so many political issues coming up that had to be resolved through discussion, and here was Dilli Raman insisting on such a purposeless issue. The complications continued for some days. Meanwhile, a group in Kathmandu that was against us and opposed to democracy had started a poisonous propaganda campaign against me. That campaign now became totally focused on building up Dilli Raman Regmi.

It was against this background that I resumed work. As soon as I did so, there was an even sharper crescendo of propaganda targeting me. I

called the Working Committee and began work as best as I knew how. I started visiting the border regions and called meetings right along the frontier. But the Kathmandu people preferred to sit on the fence, as was their constant predilection, jumping to whichever side promised more advantage. The charge against me was that I was fighting for a position for myself rather than for democracy.

I was released in September or October of 1947, and after that, right up to March 1948, time was taken up by the wrangling with Dilli Raman Regmi. Then, though it would be dangerous, I came up with the idea of visiting Kathmandu because it seemed important to organise there. Meanwhile, because the Ranas wielded so much influence, in Kathmandu they were able to start all kinds of rumours. I also began to develop this feeling that Dilli Raman Regmi had made things easy for them, and later on it was proved to be true.

A campaign in Kathmandu would have to have its own peculiarities. A group had been formed there, with Tripurbar Singh as its chairman. He was a member, and we were in touch. I had not shared this idea of going to Kathmandu with anyone other than Ganesh Manji, Rudra Giri and Gopal Prasad Bhattarai. They all agreed with the plan, and it was decided that Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and I would make the journey, with Kedar Man Byathit as our guide.

I have a story about Kedar Man Byathit as well. He and Hora Prasad Joshi had come to Benaras during the hot summer season. Whoever came from Kathmandu in those days used to arrive with a great air of mystery, as if they alone were carrying the heavy burden of revolution. He would meet with Ganesh Manji first, saying, "We will meet with BP later." Back in Kathmandu, Padma Shumshere was still in power, and it seemed the prime minister had told them, "Go and get involved in the party set up by BP and others. Tell them that I am in full sympathy with them. To prove the point, I will even give you a pistol."

They had brought the pistol along with them, and thought themselves as great revolutionaries. Ganesh Manji came and told me of their arrival and their desire to have a meeting. It was clear from what he said that the two were Padma Shumshere's men. The prime minister of the day was an extremely weak personality, trying to maintain good relations with everyone—with India, the other Ranas, and with us. And this was how he had chosen to approach us, through these two who were carrying a weapon given by him. However, we were not unhappy that they had arrived. As far as Kathmandu was concerned, we were like peasants after the rice harvest, having to pick up individual grains

from the ground. Byathit was articulate, whereas Hora Prasad was the quiet-but-strong sort.

Padma Shumshere seemed to be facing a difficult time in Kathmandu. He had sent a note to India saying that Mohan Shumshere was planning to kill him, that his life was in danger. He had gone to India on a state visit, and Jawaharlal Nehru told me, "I am pressuring him to return, for it will be easier for you all if he remains in power. If he goes, it will get difficult. Thus, you too must make him return, providing some assurance or other." This was why I went to meet Padma Shumshere when he came to Calcutta.

Padma Shumshere was one who ran scared. He was in such a state that he went to urinate four or five times as we met. He wept ten or fifteen times. I remember thinking, what can someone like this achieve? I shared this feeling with Jawaharlalji. Padma Shumshere had taken Jawaharlal Nehru's help to get Sri Prakash to Nepal in order to draft a constitution—a *panchayat* constitution—the very one that formed the basis for today's Panchayat constitution. You know how they claim today that this is all very substantial and new? That draft contained similar provisions. We did not agree to that draft. After that, Padma Shumshere did not return to Nepal. He remained in India.

20

I recall an incident that happened before Padma Shumshere came to India. I was busy organising and believed that Padma Shumshere's feebleness as a ruler could be used to serve the purpose of bringing democracy. His son, Basanta Shumshere, had a democratic mindset and helped significantly later on, putting me up when I did not have a place to stay in Kathmandu. But I did not know him back then. He had come to Benaras and stayed with an important aristocrat named Madhav Rao Sanda.

At that time, Babu Maiya was studying at the university, probably doing her BA. I suggested to her, "Go and meet Basanta Shumshere on behalf of the students and tell him that B.P. Koirala wants to have a talk with you." She went to the mansion where Basanta Shumshere was staying, by the *ghats* near the university, and sent in word that a Nepali student wished to see him. He immediately met her, alone, and she passed my message.

He said, "I, too, wish to meet him. How shall we arrange it?"

Babu Maiya replied, "You make a suggestion. He is even willing to come here."

He replied, "There is no sense in meeting here."

It turned out that they had plans to go to the Nishaat Cinema Hall the next evening, and so he said, "I will come to Nishaat in my car, and you stand outside with B.P. Koirala. I do not know him, nor will he recognise me. Stand next to him, and I will recognise you and move towards you. That's what we will do."

It was about six the next evening when he got out of his car at the cinema, and Babu Maiya was standing across the street on the footpath with me. He saw her and exclaimed, "Wasn't it you who came to meet me yesterday? Have you also come to see the film?" Babu Maiya replied, "No, I just happen to be here." She introduced me to Basanta Shumshere, who said, "This is not the place to talk, let's go somewhere else." I suggested taking a boat on the Ganga.

Basanta Shumshere was a person with some nerve, so he immediately agreed. He went up to his companion and said, "I won't see the film. I will go boating on the Ganga instead. This lady suggests that we go boating, and that's what I will do." And so we went to the Dasaswamedh Ghat and hired a boat, just the three of us. I told Basanta Shumshere, "This is a good time to hold discussions, when your father is prime minister. Later, the situation might change for the worse."

Basanta Shumshere did not have a good relationship with his father. He said, "My father, too, wants to do something. But we must finish off these Ranas. If my father and I were to have any interest in some kind of action, it would be to do away with them at one go. If you can arrange for me to have five or six grenades, I shall do the job."

This was January 1948. I remember because it was the time of Gandhiji's assassination. Basanta Shumshere's daughter was undergoing treatment in Calcutta for tuberculosis. After listening to him there on the boat, I asked, "How do you propose to carry out the action?"

He said, "Every evening, Commander-in-Chief Mohan Shumshere and everyone else gathers for *chakari*, to salute the prime minister. When they are all gathered, we must throw five or six grenades in from the windows."

I said, "But then your father will die as well."

He replied, "They go to tell the Maharaja that it is time to make his entrance only when everyone is gathered. That will be the moment to strike. If you can get me six powerful hand grenades, I can do it."

So I said, "Okay, I will get you the grenades."

I had not met Gandhiji till then, and had planned to go to Delhi from there to meet him. I asked Basanta Shumshere how long he would be in Benaras, and he replied, "In a day or two I will go to Calcutta, where

my daughter is being treated. I will stay there for about a week and then return."

"In which case, on 30 January, I will bring six hand grenades and pass them to you," I said. I remember clearly I had said 30 January, for that was also the day that Gandhi was killed.

I left for Delhi that very night after the meeting on the boat. It must have been 25 or 26 January. I met Gandhi on 28 January. Rammanohar Lohia took me over to meet him. I got there at 10 am and left at 4 pm. I stayed there the whole day, and my picture was printed in the papers. Many foreign press people were there that day, and because I was in that group, I am also identified as a foreign correspondent. I was wearing a *sherwani*, and had on a muffler like the one I am wearing now. It was a winter's day in Birla House. I had a talk with Gandhi.

After hearing me out, Gandhi asked after my health. You could see that he was in a dark mood. The Indian government was not heeding his suggestions and he was feeling isolated. Jawaharlalji and Sardar Patel were quarrelling as if it would be one or the other. Meanwhile, I shared with Gandhiji everything that I had in my mind, about our struggle and what the situation was like.

Gandhiji said, "I cannot help you in any way. If my own people will not heed me, will the Ranas listen? I do not think I can help in any way." I replied, "I have not come seeking any material support from you. We need your sympathy and moral support for our struggle. You are not only a leader of India but a beacon for wherever there is exploitation. You must give your support to wherever people are struggling for freedom." When I said that, he responded, "Wherever there is struggle against injustice, exploitation and repression, it will have my support. But I cannot do anything more than that. I myself—I only see darkness."

This is what Gandhi said to me, just two days before he died.

Thereafter, I told Lohia about the matter of the hand grenades for Basanta Shumshere. He said, "I will deliver them to you in Calcutta. You be sure to get there on the 30th, and I will make the arrangements." After meeting Gandhi, we had gone over to the residence of Jawaharlalji. He was not in, but Indira Gandhi was there. We met her and engaged in some banter. At that time, P.C. Joshi, the communist leader, was staying at Indira Gandhi's as a houseguest.

Lohia asked Indira Gandhi, "Where is your blue-eyed boy?"

She replied, "Who would you be referring to?"

"P. C. Joshi."

"Lohia Saheb, you are very funny!" Indira Gandhi said.

I remember that visit well. When we went from Gandhiji's to Jawaharlalji's, we took a one-horse carriage rather than a taxi. That was the normal thing to do back then, but our *tanga* was stopped at the gate whereas cars were being allowed in. Lohia got angry and protested, something that came to him naturally. We managed to pass through, and once in he told Indira Gandhi, "What's this, are we allowed to visit the prime minister only in cars? We cannot keep cars, and we take *tangas* rather than taxis."

Indira Gandhi replied, "No, no! Don't worry. It is only a matter of keeping the place clean, for the horses dirty the driveway." When we left, we found that the our *tanga's* horse had indeed messed up the portico of the prime minister's residence. That was an amusing incident.

I went by train to Calcutta that very night, on the 28th, and arrived on the morning of the 30th. I made my contact, and the man said he would have the grenades ready for transfer at 6 o'clock. He told me to be standing at a particular place. I arrived at the appointed hour, and the contact came over and handed me the six hand grenades, wrapped in a white towel. I had called Basanta Shumshere on the phone and asked him to come over. He was staying at Park Street with his daughter.

And so there I was, waiting, grenades in hand. From the radio of a cigarette and *paan* vendor nearby I heard the news—Gandhi has died. Here I was, waiting with grenades handed to me by someone that I had to pass on to someone else. I was engulfed by a sense of gloom. I realised at that moment what great devotion I felt for Gandhi. I felt that the world had come tumbling down.

Basanta Shumshere arrived; I gave him the bundle. I came back to my boarding house and cried through the night. I had relied greatly on Gandhiji's support, and he had also been responsible for saving me from the Rana jail. Besides, he was not only a champion for people like us. He was behind people fighting oppression anywhere and everywhere.

I appreciate what Ho Chi Minh said about Gandhi: "Whatever may be my disagreements with Gandhi, we are all his products. Wherever there is a struggle, he has given his support and moral leadership. Even as someone who believes in violence, I can say that we are all his progeny." That's how I felt standing there at the street corner in Calcutta. In direct opposition to Gandhi's own beliefs, I had just sent off six grenades for the annihilation of the entire Rana clan in Kathmandu.

Basanta Shumshere took those grenades to Kathmandu. Every day I waited, expecting to hear news of the blast in Kathmandu. But nothing happened. Later, when we came here after the revolution, I asked him,

“So, why didn’t you do it?” He replied, “I was unable to complete the job because I relied on a friend.” He seems to have taken Nar Shumshere into confidence, who had said, “This has to be done, but not now. You should not keep those bombs, give them to me.” Nar Shumshere kept the grenades. Basanta Shumshere kept pressing him, but Nar Shumshere invariably told him that the time was not right.

Padma Shumshere went to India that year and never returned. He asked for some property to be arranged for him in Ranchi so that he could stay here, and said he would not return because he feared he would be assassinated. So Padma Shumshere sent in his abdication notice from Ranchi. Narendra Mani came to Ranchi for that purpose and carried the note back with him to Kathmandu. Padma Shumshere built himself a house in Ranchi.

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It was 1948; I do not recall the month. Because a lot of irresponsible things kept happening, we decided it was important to explain things to the people of Kathmandu. So Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and I headed for the Valley with our guide Kedarman Byathit. Looking back, I think it was a dramatic and romantic sojourn.

That we came to Kathmandu was, of course, significant; how we came, perhaps less so. We arranged a meeting with friends in Jayanagar, at the *dak* bungalow where we normally met. I used to stay in that *dak* bungalow and we would meet on the verandah. Our friends would come from the border regions although more than half of the gathering would have been made up of undercover agents.

From there, Ganesh Manji, Kisunji and I—three or four of us—came to Darbhanga, where Rudra Giri had arranged for our stay. At Darbhanga, I assumed a disguise. I have always shaved, but now I wore a moustache. I wore a pair of metal-framed spectacles, with slightly broken frames and a shabby look, like an old man’s glasses. I thus took on the guise of a chaste Bahun, with sandalwood *tika* on the forehead and a substantial pigtail. I became a *pandit*, and Kisunji my student. Byathit acted the role of a Kathmandu *sahu* who had come down to the plains to buy buffaloes.

We arrived in Jayanagar from Darbhanga by train at about midnight. We could have reached Janakpur from there along the border, but, instead, walking in the dark, we arrived at the house of Bodhbabu (Bodh Prasad Upadhyaya) in a village near Janakpur at about 4 or 5 in the morning. He

welcomed us as soon as he saw us. Bodhbabu was surprised to see us, and as he took us in he asked how we had come. We told him we had followed the railway tracks.

I asked Bodhbabu to help us, and he replied, "Yes, of course, I will help you. The day after tomorrow, the whole family will leave, with the excuse that we are going to our hill village to celebrate Dasai." And so, as planned, we headed out on bullock-carts with Bodh Prasad's family, including his mother, wife, sister-in-law and everyone else. He told everyone along the way, "This is my nephew, who is studying in Benaras. He has come home after a long time and we are going up to our hill village for Dasai." There were three carts in all, and we carried our food with us. I still remember Bodhbabu's sister-in-law well; I think she was his brother's wife.

I had told Bodh Prasad, "Just get us past the fort at Chisapani." It turned out that the village of Manthali, past Chisapani, was his ancestral village. It had been many years since he had celebrated Dasai there, and here we were travelling with him. It took us two or three days to reach the hills, spending nights along the way. We still had to pass Chisapani Garhi, where the fort was. We arrived beneath the fort early one morning. Beneath the fort, there is a big, well-known plain, whose name I forget. We spent the night there, and headed out in the morning. It was cold, it being the time of Dasai. Up above, there was a gate made of stones and rocky steps leading up to it. Our whole group, men and women, were headed up and, looking up, we saw the captain of the fort descending on his horse. He was from Manthali or Chisapani and seemed to know Bodhbabu. I do not remember the name of the fort now.

"Hello, Panditji, where are you headed?" the captain asked Bodh Prasadji.

Bodh Prasadji replied, "It has been a long time since I have been home. These two study Sanskrit in Benaras, and have come home this time. So I am taking them to our house in the hills to celebrate Dasai, drawn by the memory of our brothers and sisters."

The captain was in full agreement: "That's right, one should never abandon the hills completely." He inquired about us, and Bodh Prasadji explained why we were there. As the captain bade us good-bye, he cautioned us that we would not make it all the way in a day and asked where we intended to spend the night. With the captain himself having sped us on our way, there was no one to block our path at the fort itself. We were relieved at having passed such a major obstacle, the fortress of Chisapani.

We climbed up to the fort and then down the other side, where there is

a river. A spot was cleared, and Bodh Prasadji's sister-in-law and mother passed around some snacks and began to prepare *daal bhat*. When I said we had to be on our way, they were very sad. The mother said, "Have your meal first, for you may not get anything along the trail." The daughter-in-law was one who spoke little.

I said, "We have given you enough trouble getting us this far, thank you. Now, we should not waste time eating."

We had little to carry. All three of us were carrying our clothes in bundles on our backs. Kedarman was very well dressed in Nepali clothes, as if he were a trader. I was dressed like a *pandit*, with *tika*, and constantly repeating Sanskrit *slok*. Time and time again, within earshot of people, I would say something like, "Okay Krishna Prasad, I will now meditate and do some *puja*. You get some food ready." On the reststops along the way, we could not but attract attention. As was the way in the hills, we were constantly being asked, "Where are you from, where are you going?" In that manner, we reached Banepa, east of Kathmandu Valley.

Nearing Banepa, I said, "I cannot carry this weight much longer." I left some clothing I did not need by the wayside, and Kisunji did the same. Kedarman was carrying his bundle with great difficulty. On the trail, he wore a woollen jacket, dress shoes, *mayalpos surwal* and Nepali topi—looking the typical trader.

Byathit knew Purna Bahadur MA's brother, who was a teacher in Banepa. He said, "You wait awhile; I will go meet him." He went away and was a long time returning. Byathit had apparently started enjoying food and hospitality at that place and quite forgot about us. Meanwhile, we had to get to Kathmandu that day. There was a large police post ahead of us, at a place called Nala. This was one of the four guarded points of entry into the Valley, like the check-post on the way up from Bhimphedi.

Byathit, it turned out, had been discussing how to get past the Nala checkpost, and Purna Bahadur's brother was a great help. He said that he would go with us to Kathmandu, and suggested that he and Kedarman walk ahead. "You should walk like a guru and his student. They are busy gambling, and you must speak only if made to," he said. "Once we get through, let us spend the night at my brother's." We did not even know where to stay the night, such was our state. "After we get to Bhaktapur from Banepa, we can get a ride on a truck from there to Kathmandu at night," Purna Bahadur's brother said. Dasai was already over; it was now the time of Tihar.

When we got to Nala, we saw there was a gambling game in progress by the roadside, with the policemen participating. Our challenge was to

pass unharassed. The trail was very narrow going past the post, but they were all enjoying themselves. I had a red *tika* on my forehead, looking as if I had just come from officiating a *puja* at a client's. I had a *bota* in my hand, as if it contained the cash and grain offerings from the *puja*. As we came upon the gamblers, I said, "Hello! Allow us to put a side bet." A policeman who was watching from afar said, "Panditji, be careful that you do not lose all the money you collected today!" A small crowd gathered. Putting on the pose of a gambler making his choice, I said, "Please place a *mohar* on *tiya*, number three."

He put it there, and I lost. Then I said, "Please put another one." That, too, was lost. The policeman who had spoken up, it turned out, was studying me with some sympathy. He said, "Now, now, don't overdo it Panditji, or your missus will get angry!" Kisunji repeated a *sloka* on the evils of gambling. However, I said, "No, no, let's try one more time. Maybe the tables will turn." But even that was a loser. We got up, saying, "This place is not working for us." The soldiers did not stop us. If anything, they saw us on our way with a lot of commiseration.

Our companions were waiting for us beyond the post, past a bend in the road. The road coming up to Bhaktapur from Kathmandu also made it as far as Nala, but it was not passable during the rains. Walking, we arrived in Bhaktapur at about 7 pm and stopped a truck which was returning to Kathmandu full of road labourers and others. They recognised the teacher, and he sat in the front seat of the truck. Immediately, the truck started moving but he asked the driver to stop, saying, "I also have with me a friend, a shoestore owner from Thaiti." Kedarman was now a shoe merchant. By that time Krishna Prasad and I had also reached the truck and we asked the driver to please take us as well, for where would we spend the night otherwise? Some people urged from the back of the truck, "Let's take these poor Bahuns along with us!" The teacher also added his two bit, and the shoe trader called out, "You, old man, ride in the cab in the front."

The shoe trader gave up the place reserved for him in the cab, and put me there instead. "I will be okay at the back," he told the driver. "This old Bahun has to stay here in the front." The teacher and I thus got to sit up in front, and Kisunji and Byathit climbed into the back. The truck dropped us off near Ghanta Ghar. We did not know our way around Kathmandu, and Kedarman Byathit and Purna Bahadur's brother guided us, taking us straight home. I think it was the day of Bhai Tika. They had the attic cleaned and put us up there, feeding us well. I then explained why we had come.

Our hosts wanted to know who I planned to meet starting the next day. A small group called the Nepal Praja Panchayat had been formed in Kathmandu under the leadership of Tripurbar Singh, so I requested him to come. Gopal Prasad Rimal was the group's secretary, a poet who later developed mental illness. I did not know him and had not invited him, but he came along, brought by Tripurbar Singh. We conversed, but as soon as they left, Purna Bahadur said, "Now you have to leave this house. They are Mrigendra Shumshere's men." He added, "I trust Tripurbar, but not Gopal Prasad Rimal. You are no longer safe here. You should move, not for our sake but for your own."

Poor Rimal has died, but this is what Purna Bahadur said. They kept me there the whole day while they looked for another safehouse. When I asked Tripurbar about Rimal, he said, "I have full faith in him." But then he added, "Many say that they do not trust him." That night I was moved from Purna Bahadur's by two men who were important people from during the Praja Parishad period. One's name was Sundar, the other's I have forgotten. They arranged for a house for me to stay in.

With Kedarman Byathit's help, I constantly moved from place to place, staying a day or two at each. Everywhere, it was at the house of lower class Newar families, with men engaged in the lower levels of government service. It was during this time that I learnt about the level of poverty in the city. It was hard for us, used to life in the plains, to imagine this kind of destitution. Sure, you saw the city folks wearing fine clothes, but I never saw anyone drinking milk. I must have stayed with 10 or 15 families during that period, and among them drinking milk seemed unheard of. They consumed a lot of rice, with a little *daal* and chilli pepper and, since it was winter, some mustard greens. I did not think I would survive this diet. Every so often, I used to send out to buy cauliflower. My poor hosts tried hard to give me good meals. That was my first experience of the poverty that afflicted the majority of Kathmandu's Newars.

All the families showered me with affection, the mothers, the daughters and the daughters-in-law. There were many families that did not speak Nepali. They taught me a few useful words in Newari, such as the words for hot water and warm rice, *kwa la*, *kwa ja*, and so on. Mostly, I used to be relegated to the attics, on the top floor. A couple of times, I also stayed with some families that were somewhat well-to-do. In particular, I remember one house near the Kathmandu Ganesh, where they had invited me saying, "We must have discussions at length." That house had a drawing

room, and I had a nice bedstead and bedding. Thus it was—I went wherever they took me.

We were fully behind Tripurbarji's small organisation, the Nepal Praja Panchayat, which distributed pamphlets and held meetings. However, we wished to have it consolidated within the Nepali Congress and there was some disagreement on that count. Tripurbar was with us, but others did not favour amalgamation. We used to talk about these things. And then there was the difficulty of raising funds.

As far as fund-raising was concerned, we were completely unsuccessful and could not raise a *paisa*. Other than what was required for our own subsistence, we were not able to add anything to our party coffers. Nobody helped. Ganesh Manji had written letters to many, but no one was interested. One Balkrishna Sahu, who worked with gold and silver, gave 200 rupees if I remember correctly. That money came in useful when Kisunji had to return to Benaras. It was a time when you needed a permit to leave Kathmandu Valley, and he had to use another name. Some officer had to sign and authorise the paperwork. There was no reason for Kisunji to remain in Kathmandu, so he left.

Once I went to Tripurbar's for a meal, and the whole family was present. I had arrived by jumping the wall. In a way, that whole period was extremely romantic. I was staying at a house near the Kathmandu Ganesh with a family that Ganesh Manji knows much about. It was a well-to-do clan and the family members questioned me quite a bit, suspecting me of being a royalist. There were some designs on the receipt book that we had brought with us, and among them was a swastika. No one had thought of that, and this man from the family said, "This swastika is a sign of the Nazis. This is not appropriate."

I became quite disheartened with Kathmandu's intellectuals, and till today that feeling persists. They love to highlight unimportant matters, which gave me sleepless nights. They are big on discussion, but do not give a *paisa* of support. Our objective was to set up a kingship answerable to a constitution, but that man at Ganeshthan, for example, would challenge me: "Why have you retained the king in there? You are his people, you are royalists." I feel that this kind of thinking is still prevalent in Kathmandu today, a mindset that does not accept democracy, one that only likes to argue and create unnecessary complications by giving importance to inane ideas. The attitude of that man, for example, was to accept the king's doing *puja* to the swastika, but to raise vehement objection if it inadvertently came up in a design along with many other motifs. In all likelihood, he too worshipped the swastika at home. They were all rich.

They, and their wives and sisters, kept me well and gave me due respect. They treated me nicely, but in the end I was quite disheartened.

I met as many people as I could in Kathmandu town, and then turned my attention to the suburbs, including Dilli Bazaar. I stayed at the house of Singha Bahadur Basnet, in Maiti Devi. When I first came here, to Kathmandu, the most active person was Narsingh Bahadur Shrestha, the son of one of Mohan Shumshere's courtiers. He was a student leader. Another was Puku, Pushkar Nath Upadhyaya. Narsingh Bahadur was the leader among them. As I said, they came to meet me when I was caught the first time, during Padma Shumshere's time, and I had asked them, "Why have you come?" It was this same Narsingh Bahadur who had replied, "What instructions do you have for us? What do you want us to do?"

They were all from Dilli Bazaar, and I was taken to Singha Bahadur Basnet's in order to meet them. Singha Bahadur's father had expired, but his father's junior wife was still alive. Since we could not tell her the reason for my presence, a story had to be cooked up. It turned out that there was talk of getting Singha Bahadur Basnet married, and so he told the lady, "Someone has come from the hills. He is talking of giving his daughter's hand in marriage, and so I am keeping him here."

He spread straw on the bottom floor, covered it up with rugs, and made the place ready for me. One after another, people started coming to meet me. I began sharing my thoughts on responsible government. I emphasised the need to establish democracy through the active participation of the people and said that our goal was responsible governance. In fact, we were highlighting responsible government and civil liberties even more than democracy. I assured them that the one in which we were involved was the true Nepali Congress, for at that time there were two Nepali Congress parties, ours and the one claimed by Dilli Raman Regmi. I had to clarify the situation.

When the name of Ganesh Manji came up, the people here said, "But he is a foolish man." Talk such as this from the intellectuals and well-to-do here was extremely discouraging, and I still have not got over that feeling. When referring to Ganesh Manji, they used to say, "But he is a fool." I replied, "Do you expect Ganesh Manji to agree with you?" They happened to be Newars.

I felt that in the course of our struggle, at some point it was inevitable that we meet Mohan Shumshere. Obviously, there would be need for a go-between, and how to go about it was the question. Dakur Daju tutored Bijaya Shumshere's son. My practice was to leave one safehouse for

another after the night cannon had gone off. I would make my move during the gap of 10 to 15 minutes when it was possible. As soon as the morning's cannon went off, I would move to another location. It was the cold season.

I had no idea where Dakur Daju stayed. People gave me confusing directions, but I had such good reckoning that I happened to knock on his very door. There was only five minutes left before the cannonfire. That was the safest period, when people could be seen scurrying homeward. Dakur Daju shouted from above, "Who is it?" I replied, "Open up down below, quick." He must have recognised my voice, and he descended with a lamp. Back then, the system was that every house got one point of electricity so that there would be a bulb in one room, but the rest had to make do with lamps. Dakur Daju opened the door and took me in.

"Why have you come?" he asked, although of course he knew the reason. There had been much talk about my arrival in Kathmandu, and everyone knew that the government was having a difficult time locating me. I said, "I have to meet Mohan Shumshere. It must be arranged." He asked in return, "How would one arrange it?" I replied, "You tutor Bijaya Shumshere's son. Please arrange it through Bijaya Shumshere."

He seemed to have thought over the matter all night, and discussed it with Bhauju, his wife. Chuda Prasad Sharma's father was a courtier of Mohan Shumshere's, and much liked by Chandra Shumshere. "I will tell him (Chuda Prasad); he might be able to do it," said Dakur Daju. I replied, "Do whatever you think is necessary, and let them know that I am keen for a meeting." I remember having instructed Dakur Daju to pass on my proposal, which was: "If the negotiations are successful then there is no worry. If they fail, I should not be arrested for 24 hours and should be given that grace period." I had wanted to get this message to Bijaya Shumshere, but Dakur Daju seemed too afraid to do that. Instead, he opted to approach Chuda Prasad's father.

He said, "Okay, I will pass on the message. In a couple of days, from Tripureswar I will come by the bamboo grove near Sano Tudikhel (where the stadium is today). If I have my gloves off, understand that the mission was unsuccessful. If I have my gloves on, follow me." I waited at the appointed spot, and when he came by he did not have his gloves on—it was clear that the proposal had fallen through. After that, there was no question of pursuing the matter further.

Earlier, I had already met Indian Ambassador Sundar Singh Majithiya on this matter. He had a private secretary to whom I had said, "I cannot meet formally, it will have to be a secret meeting." The private secretary said, "Come on over, but not through the main gate." I had got in contact

with him through two of my colleagues, whose names I now forget. With them, he sent instructions that I was to take the lane going from Lazimpat towards the embassy compound. There was a pile of discarded wooden boxes on the inside, and I was to climb over them. That was how I entered. The personal secretary, a Sikh gentleman, said, "I have spoken to the ambassador. You should meet him at a particular time on the golf field."

Sundar Singh Majithiya played golf at the place where the airport came up later, and at that time only his plane landed there. It was a huge pasture, and he used to go there every evening for a round of golf. When I arrived, he was already playing. Bijaya Shumshere and some others were also present. As I was trying to make out which one was the ambassador, it got dark and the game was called off. A gentleman came close by and said, "Let's go." There was a path that went down through the forest towards Pashupati, and we went along it. He said to me, "I will tell the prime minister, but I cannot guarantee your safety." I replied, "That is an important point. You make sure that my message reaches Mohan Shumshere. I am willing to meet him on one condition, that I must not be arrested for 24 hours after our meeting. After that, he may do what he pleases."

He said, "You know, this is not my job. How can I say what you want me to? The prime minister is not going to agree with that condition." I said, "Say it if you can." He was very reluctant to do that. This happened after my meetings with Dakur Daju.

As it turned out, Chuda Prasad's father had indeed raised the matter with Mohan Shumshere. By that time, the news of my arrival had got around and the police and palace guards were all over town. Mohan Shumshere told Chuda Prasad's father, "Fine, I am prepared to meet him, but not on his conditions. It will be up to me whether to arrest him or to let him go." I could not agree to that, I said, and asked Dakur Daju to pass on the message.

They then became even more watchful. Earlier, they had only assumed my presence, but now they knew for sure. The search was now on in earnest. I was staying near Raktakali, at the house of the Newar wife of a relative of the Palpa Commander-in-Chief Rudra Shumshere's. She and her daughter showed me great affection when they gave me refuge. The household also included some of Ganesh Manji's cousins, who were later very helpful to us. I think I stayed there for seven or eight days.

Once, I even lived in the house of the priest of the Guheswari temple—one has to climb above the Guheswari flats to get there. I moved there in order to be able to meet the people of Chabel and Baudha. The

Chinia Lama's sons came to meet me there, asking what they could do. They were bright and had some links to the Ranas. Even so, they had come to meet me.

There was a man named Triratna, who went to Calcutta for his jewellery business. I had met him a few times in Calcutta, and also here. I used to like *mamacha* dumplings a lot and in his house you got the best. One day he told me, "Come with me, my *didi* makes the greatest *mamachas*." Elsewhere, too, my hosts made *mamachas*, knowing how much I liked them. I went to Triratna's hoping to meet some people.

Triratna had obliged me once when I needed funds desperately. I had asked him for some money, and he had asked, "How much do you want?" I said that I needed about two or four thousand rupees, which in those days was a lot. He looked at me with wide eyes. "Where am I supposed to get you that amount?" he asked. "But I have a diamond given to me by a Rana to sell. It costs 35 thousand rupees. If you can sell it for anything more than that, the additional amount is yours. You can also keep my commission."

I took the diamond and with the help of my Bengali friend visited some jewellers. However, I did not get a good price from anyone; the most I was offered was 36 thousand rupees at one place, which would hardly bring in any significant surplus. Seeing my predicament, Triratna said, "Sell it if you are in such dire need. But then I will not have any respect left, and no one will trust me thereafter. Till now, I have been dealing in lakhs worth of jewellery." This was the first time that I had held something that expensive, a diamond worth 36 thousand rupees. I returned it to him, saying, "No, thank you." That is the kind of goodwill Triratna had shown me.

And so Triratna invited me to come over to have *mamachas*. I went over and stayed for a meal. He lived well and he also fed me well that night. We talked and laughed together with some others present. It was comfortable living, and I lived this way for about a month.

The one problem I had was going to the toilet. In these Newar houses, I experienced not only extreme poverty but also squalor. The courtyards were dirty. Indoors, other than the living room, nothing was clean. One could not bear to visit the toilets, which was why I would wake up early and head towards Swayambhu. There was an armoury near Swayambhu, beside which, amidst a large field, a river flowed in a gully. That is where I used to go, every day. Some days when I had to meet people, I called them to Swayambhu.

I was arrested the day before I was supposed to move to another

hideout. An hour and a half before my arrest, Purna Prasad Brahman arrived. That was the first time I had met him, and he said he wanted to talk to me at length about literature. He had written a story about birds at that time. There was a nice hilly idiom to his writing and it was a good story. I listened to him read it. An hour and a half later, someone came to report that the palace guards and police were about. Before long, we saw them. I was wearing a *bhoto-surwal* and wrapped in a thick shawl. Kedarman Byathit was with me. Everyone else had left. There was one other person, Gauri, who was from Burma and who later became a fiery communist. I believe she is related to Sahana and Sadhana.

I had to try to escape. I had my coat with me and I put it on. I had on my *bhoto* and inner *surwal*. There was no time to look for my shoes, but I did grab my socks. With them in hand, we climbed up to the attic, with the idea of jumping to the adjoining house and make good our escape. But then I saw a policeman standing on the other roof. Below, many other policemen had gathered. But the courtyard had many lanes leading out of it, and so Byathit and I headed down. But what we thought was the way to the toilet led straight into the courtyard. Byathit emerged first and two policemen grabbed him. He squirmed fiercely and struggled free. When they saw me, they forgot about him. They lunged at me and caught me by the collar. Had I known the neighbourhood I might have been able to evade my captors, but I did not. It was not even that dark; there was still some daylight left.

They had a brought a truck. The road was teeming with people, but there was no one who knew me. Colonel Chandra Bahadur Thapa did not recognise me, nor did the men who had captured me. Chandra Bahadur Thapa asked me, "Who are you?" I replied, "Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala." They showed some surprise at that, thinking that I would have done something drastic. And there I was, wearing those kinds of clothes. They thought it strange.

"What did you say again?" he asked me. "I am Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala," I repeated. He said sternly, "We will know soon enough who you are. There are people who will identify you." When they discovered I was in Kathmandu they had brought over someone who recognised me from Biratnagar. After placing me in the truck, they brought this man over and had him identify me.

A few others were also arrested at Triratna's, including the woman named Gauri. The guards scolded them using rather coarse language. They were handcuffed, while I was not. I was tied with a cummerbund, Chandra Bahadur's own, which he had taken off. I said, "What is their

crime? I am the main leader, why are you shouting at them?" He replied, "Don't worry, your turn will also come." I said, "If you have to use those handcuffs, put them on me." To which he replied, "Whatever Maharaja says is how it will be. We will take you to him and do what he orders." It was getting dark as we were taken to Singha Darbar.

23

I was taken to Singha Darbar, where for six months I suffered about as much as it is possible for a human to suffer. I went with the clothes I had—a coat, a *bhoto* and a thin *surwal*. I had no shoes and nothing else, and it in was the cold of December. That was my situation.

When we arrived at Singha Darbar, they took me out of the truck and it took 10 or 15 minutes before instructions came from above. Mohan Shumshere, the prime minister, had to be consulted for everything, and to send word to him alone would take 15, 20, 25 minutes, sometimes half an hour. As it was, Chandra Bahadur Thapa could not go up to Mohan Shumshere by himself. He would tell an official, who would pass the message to an aide de camp, who would in turn present the matter to the prime minister. The order came down that I should be bound in handcuffs and fetters. That was it. And so they put on handcuffs plus fetters on my feet, as well as a chain around the waist. I did not know that humans were ever kept that way.

The chains did not make such an impression, but when they hammered away, fixing the fetters on my feet, that seemed extremely uncivilised. A blacksmith was brought from outside to do the job. He had to hammer vertically in order to fix the fetters, but in order not to hurt my foot in case the hammer slipped, he was striking at a slant. Once, the hammer did slip and struck the stone on which the fetters rested. At that, the officer who was standing next to me scolded the blacksmith, "Careful! You might break the slab!" The blacksmith replied, "I was aiming at the foot but it slipped and hit the stone." "If his bone is broken, it will mend, but will you give me money for this broken piece of stone?" Such harsh words serve to illustrate the attitude of my jailers.

After my manacles were all in place, they took me to the guardhouse. By the time they had brought me there, it was already ten at night. As you enter Singha Darbar, towards the right is a semi-circular one-storeyed building in which soldiers bunk. I was led to a room towards the middle of this building. It was a winter's day and the men were in greatcoats.

Inside, everyone was asleep. I was left standing on the flat stone slabs between two cots, and all around me were hundreds of sleeping men. A soldier, the same one who had fixed the chain around my waist, was holding one end and sitting next to me. He pointed to the stone floor and said, "You sit there." I was given neither a quilt nor bedding, and it was freezing; it was December. For warmth, I had nothing more than what I was wearing. The windows and doors of the room were all open, and I was placed close to a door. They kept me like that for three days.

The first day, they did not feed me. Nothing could be done without the Maharaja's permission, and he could only be informed at his convenience. Up to 10 in the morning, he would be doing his *puja*, so there would be no question of serving me a meal before that. But then, I was hardly in the mood to eat. When the command came down, on a scrap of paper they served me some radish, potatoes, *chiura-bhatmas* and some fried stuff bought from the vendor outside the Singha Darbar gates. The Maharaja must have given instructions to feed me, but the fare was probably decided by the lower functionaries. In the evening, once again on a scrap of paper they brought the same items from the vendor, radish, potatoes and *chiura-bhatmas*. I have to say it was nutritious, but that was all they gave me.

A courtier colonel named Thapa, a well-known official and the father of Sobhag Jang, came by often to inspect. However, he would not check on my comfort. Later, he came to ask me to give his son a job and the latter became my secretary. But back then no one had the nerve to say anything. Great injustice was being committed, but everyone kept quiet.

I felt that I would die any moment of the extreme cold. I said to my jailers, "You have to get me a quilt and bedding." The answer was, "Why don't you ask your friends and co-conspirators?" After I was kept that way for about three days, I apparently fainted. To ward off the cold, I used to do sit-ups, which was how I spent part of the time there. Then, as I lost consciousness, I remember being overcome by a sense of great pleasantness. When I woke up, I saw that they had got a fire going and had laid me down on a military greatcoat. I seemed to have slept fitfully by the fire, as if I were having a good dream.

At about 10 or 11 pm, a man came in shouting, "Where is that prisoner who was brought in the day before?" Someone spoke up, "He's here." The man came close and I could see that he had brought a rug, a very large one. He said, "Maharaja says to give this to the prisoner." Then everyone started to feel the rug and began waxing eloquent about the Maharaja's benevolence, "What a kind-hearted Maharaja, how generous! The rug that was brought him as a gift from Rumjhatar this very day!"

They covered me with that rug. It was so big that I could sleep on it as well as pull it over myself. I told my jailers, "Please bring me a brick so that I can fashion a pillow."

They did, and I went to sleep. So, after three days they brought me that rug, which I used both as mattress and quilt. I was still cold in there, but at least there was some protection.

The next day, the order came from the prime minister that they could cook hot *daal bhat* for me if I asked for it. I said that I would not eat without bathing. I was desperate to have the manacles removed, and taking a bath would require removing my surwal, to do which the manacles would have to come off. The order came, "Okay, let him have his bath." I said, "I do not have a change of clothes." Again, they sent word up, and the reply came that I should be given a *dhoti*. But how could I take a bath with just one *dhoti*, so I tore the one I was given into two pieces.

From then on, early in the morning, I went and bathed under the tap that was about 200 yards away. The blacksmith would come and remove my manacles; I would wrap myself in a half-*dhoti*, and walk the distance to the tap. After bathing, I would put on the dry half of the *dhoti* and return with the wet one on my shoulder. The food would be ready by this time, and after breakfast the blacksmith would come back and refit the fetters. Thus, twice a day, every day, he would pry them off and put them back on. The reason I had insisted on taking a bath before meals was in the hope that the manacles would be left off permanently, but now I had to suffer having them put on twice a day.

A couple of days after the blacksmith first arrived, the Maharaja sent instructions to let the prisoner sit in the sun for a while if he expressed such a desire. At about ten or eleven in the morning, after the sun was up and the meal was over, I would be taken towards a sunny patch, my manacles and chains clanking as we proceeded. The place was close to the Supreme Court, where there was a road and a tall wall which prevented one from seeing outside the compound. A soldier would stay with me all the time. That was my daily routine: bathing, having my morning meal, taking in the sun, and so on.

Three or four days after they had started, they did not take me to the sunny patch. Upon inquiry, they replied, "Today is office day." Apparently, I was to be interrogated in a one-storey wooden house that used to stand between Singha Darbar and what was known as the Gallery House. I was presented before a group of eight or ten officers, with Hari Shumshere seated on a couch; also present were Chyanta Guruju and two *kajis*, one Marich Man Singh, Ganesh Manji's grandfather, and the other one from

the Patan area, Mahendra Bahadur Mahat. Some were seated on couches and others on chairs, according to rank.

"Sit there," they motioned, and I sat on the carpet. A soldier held the end of the chain that was attached to me and waited just outside the door. My interrogation started. There was a scribe, who started writing on a sheet of paper placed on his upraised thigh. He asked me to give my name, father's name, village, etcetera, and took down what I said. Then he asked me, "Did you not come here to overthrow the government?" I replied, "We are not targeting the government. We are seeking civil liberties and legal and responsible governance."

What I told them was no different from what I had always said. Their obvious interest was in finding out who my co-workers in the campaign were. "Tell us who else is with you in this," they said. I replied, "I will not tell you. I may tell you everything else, but not this. I have sworn before god that I will not reveal their names, and I will not break that word before you people here." I put it that way keeping in mind the religious leanings of my questioners. Kaji Ratna Man, who spoke a little softly, advised me, "Young man, that kind of an answer will not do. This tribunal is equal to the deities. You cannot get away with that argument." I said, "But I have made my vow before god. Do what you will."

Turning to the guruju, Hari Shumshere said, "What should we do? Tell us. Here is a son of a Bahun, and we are Chhetri, whose responsibility it is to protect the Bahun. What do we do with this Bahun's son?" Chyanta Guruju responded, "One can say that only when a Bahun stays by his station. That distinction is meaningless once he gets involved in political action. If this man had been doing what a Bahun does, that would be another matter." Hari Shumshere said, "That may be, but somehow I am not comfortable with the idea."

All this discussion was in front of me, and it continued in this manner for three or four hours, with no headway. Then they said, "Okay that's all for today. Think it over and come again tomorrow." The next day, the blacksmith again opened my manacles. I bathed, ate and arrived at the hearing. After three days of this, they consulted each other on whether to punish me with a beating or with lashings. When they mentioned lashing, I wondered how I would bear up. I knew that people fainted if the lashes became unbearable. I decided to grit my teeth and control myself. I wrote somewhere, later, that a man never has to suffer unbearable pain, for he loses consciousness after a certain point. If he has determination, he is able to control his suffering till that point. I sat there having determined my personal course of action.

“You know you will be whipped if you do not come clean,” they suggested. But it was the others who spoke thus, not Hari Shumshere. I replied, “Give me lashings, or any other punishment. I will not break a vow I made in front of god before you mortals.” Finally, they said, “That’s enough. He is not with us.” A soldier was called in and instructed, “The prisoner has to be punished. Get the bamboo ready for the lashing.” I watched as the soldier went to the bamboo grove nearby and came back with a pole. He hacked at the bamboo and put up an A-shaped structure on the ground. Then they brought the whip and showed it to Hari Shumshere and the others. It was made of a bunch of leather strips knotted at the tips, all of them tied together to the end of a cane. I thought they might show me the whip as well, but they didn’t.

I had witnessed lashings at the Bankepur Jail in 1942 although they did not do it often. There, they targeted the backside and the skin would tear under the lashings. A doctor would be ready at the side, checking the pulse. Here, there was no doctor present. However, that day they did not whip me, which made me think maybe they had only been trying to intimidate me. I sat back and remained silent.

After three or four days of this, Hari Shumshere again spoke up, “I do not like this, whipping a Bahun’s son when we are supposed to protect the Bahun.” He reached into his vest and showed his sacred thread. “If these people do not follow the Bahun tradition, that does not mean that I should give up my Kshatriya obligations.” From the next day, they stopped dragging me over for interrogation.

Another few days later, it was midnight when a man came shouting, “Get ready! Put your things together!” I had no belongings other than the rug which I would not be able to carry. So I merely stood up, ready, my chains clanking. One soldier asked, “What about the rug?” I showed him by manacles and asked, “How can I carry it?” There was a truck waiting, and a soldier picked up the rug threw it in. I was helped into the vehicle and taken away from the Singha Darbar compound.

The truck came to a stop in the lane between the women’s jail and Bagh Darbar, on the way to Bhote Bahal, where Hansa Man has his house today. I knew that area, for I had stayed there once. My uncle Sardar Kalidas also used to stay there in a house close to where the wall of the women’s jail ended. The truck stopped in the lane separating the jails for men and women. It was the middle of the night; the mist was not yet up, but would rise at any moment.

After a while, a gate of Hari Shumshere’s Bagh Darbar opened and the man himself emerged. He was wearing an overcoat, the kind of red sandals

you get here, and a Bhadgaunlay *topi*. He said, "As the chief of the tribunal, I am informing you of the decision in your case. We gave Maharaja our opinion and he has ordered that you be imprisoned." Having said that he turned to go, but I held him back, "How many days? How many years?" He replied, "That depends on Maharaja's will. But you will remain behind bars as long as you and your family do not improve your ways." I said, "Why this worry about my behaviour? And even if I may have done wrong, why involve my family?"

Hari Shumshere said to me, "You are being put in jail because this is Maharaja's order. From now on, whatever you have to say, tell it to the jailer."

24

The jailer led me to my place of incarceration. There was no light other than one smoky lantern with a weak flame. I was led into a cell, but I could not see anything. There was a bedstead made of wood so unseasoned that it looked like it would drip water; half the room had bluish algae on the walls from the damp. This much I could see. The ceiling was very low, and because it had been newly plastered the cement was still wet. The walls were cold and damp. They put my rug on the ground.

Having promised to come in the morning and make arrangements for meals, the jailer departed. There in the cell, I was left in total darkness, and I began to wonder about the extent to which a man can suffer in this life. Here I was, not knowing which way light would come from, nor the points of the compass. Later, at about four or five in the morning, in the first light of dawn, I was able to look out and see that there was thick fog outside. I noticed too that there was a small lampstand on the wall. The door was closed. At its bottom were some bars, beneath which there was some space.

The jailer came when it was already bright, and he said, "This is your home now. This is where you will remain. Every day you will receive from the government, like the rest of the prisoners, a pound of rice, one *paisa*, three red chillis, some salt and two bundles of firewood." The firewood came in two bundles and was thin and spindly, like the kind you use in ritual fires. In a small container, I would receive the grain, chillis, and salt in a packet of rice-paper, with one *paisa* on top. And, of course, the two bundles of firewood.

The jailer said, "You have to prepare your own meals, and for that I

will have a fireplace set up. You will not be allowed out."

I asked, "How do I go to the toilet? And where is the water?" There was a hole in one corner of the room, with a metal pipe at a slight angle.

"A man over there will fetch the water you need. You will cook yourself," the jailer said.

"What do I cook in?" I asked.

"Send for it."

"But I know no one here. I am from Biratnagar."

He said, "We do not give utensils to prisoners."

"Then all these provisions are of no use to me," I responded.

"Okay then, I will make some arrangement," he said, and left. Perhaps he asked for instructions, and he must have been told to find a way. So he came back with a toilet jug used by the cleaning woman at the women's jail. It was a battered container, with yellow patches all over. Handing it to me, the jailer said it would have to serve as my cooking pot. He said, "That poor lady, she felt sorry for you. Mind you, she may need it."

I decided that, however dirty, I would be able to get rid of all the germs from the container by heating it up. I said, "Please have this *lota* cleaned before giving it to me." Back came the reply, "Clean it yourself." I did clean it, but the yellow patches did not go away.

The jailer placed some bricks against the wall and made me an open wood-stove. Before he left, he said, "If you have money, we can have them get some vegetables for you." When I said I had no money, he suggested, "You can order vegetables by selling some of your rice." Seeing that I was not getting vegetables in my ration, I said, "Let me have half of this *mana* of rice, and with the other half get me some vegetables." He asked me what vegetable I wanted, and I said radishes, for radishes and greens were the cheapest. Thus, I used to be provided with either radishes or fresh greens. To cook a meal, I would put everything I got in one go. The firewood provided was not enough to cook the rice, the pot barely managed to come to a boil. This was how I had to eat in the jail.

I was not allowed to meet anyone, nor see even a face. I could hear what was going on outside, and also people conversing with the soldiers. The room had the stench of a toilet. There was that small opening in the wall, but no passage made for the discharge. Everything was supposed to end up in a pit below. I used a brick from the stove to cover the toilet opening, which helped limit the smell somewhat.

I devised a way to mark the passage of days. With my nails, I began to scratch the days as they rolled by on the damp wall of my cell. After a

month and half of doing this, I began to get disoriented. Hoping somehow to be able to escape, I was constantly rubbing my manacles against the ground, for an hour, two hours, three hours. The idea was to wear it down, but all I achieved was a great shine on the metal.

There was a water tap towards the left of my cell, and I could hear everything that went on there. It was from there that they fetched the water I required. One day, I heard the voice of a man singing a romantic song, something like the love lyrics of Madan Lahiri. He was singing as he washed his clothes. He was a soldier, and I listened to him.

"O brother soldier, you sing very well," I called out.

He was clearly pleased to hear that. With false modesty he said, "No, no. I just try."

I asked him, "What are you washing?"

"A handkerchief."

"Who made it?"

"My wife."

By that time, I knew that I had already touched his emotions.

"So, your wife can embroider handkerchiefs?"

He replied, "Sure, she can do anything. She has made flower patterns on this hankie; there is a red rose here and green leaves."

I could not see him, and we were communicating only with our voices. I spoke up, "You must be quite pleased with your woman. You probably think of her all the time, right?"

"Oh, is she a beauty! There is no one like her in the whole village." He started telling me his story.

I asked him, "How much do you earn?"

"Thirteen rupees."

"So how do you maintain a wife like that with thirteen rupees?"

"What can one do? There is no other work available."

"Why do you not go to India, become a *lahurey*, get a job?"

"Who will give me a job?" he asked. "Once I ran away, but they caught me and brought me back from Bhimpheedi."

I said, "But I can arrange it."

It seemed that he was afraid to ask me directly. He said, "Only someone who loved me would arrange that for me."

I told him, "I will help you, but first I would need some paper and a pen."

"I could bring you that," he said.

"Don't you see some paper scattered around you there?"

"I see nothing here," he replied.

“Do look around; maybe a piece of paper has been blown in by the wind.”

There was a piece of wrapping paper that comes with Tutikora. It is red with tissue paper on the inside. This tissue paper had blown over from the direction of Hangsa Man’s house, which was near the jail. The soldier slipped the tiny strip into my cell.

When I asked him, “And what do I write with?” he pushed in a stubby pencil. With that, I wrote a letter to Purna Bahadur.

I knew no one here in Kathmandu, so who should I send the note to? Dakur Daju I knew, but he was scared of any political involvement. Purna Bahadur MA, on the other hand, was very supportive. I told the soldier, “You go to the house of a master named Purna Bahadur, who lives near Bhedasingh. You just have to go there and ask; everyone knows his place. Go and give him this note and say that I sent you. Purna Bahadur will give you five rupees.”

‘Okay, give it to me,’ he said, and went off with the note. But it seems he forgot the ‘Purna’ in the name. He tried “Ram Bahadur” and who knows what other name, but he could not recall ‘Purna’. So he searched for three or four days before he came back. I thought of something witty to make him remember in the next try, and instructed him, “See, all you have to do is remember ‘pu’ for Purna Bahadur, and go and give him the note.” Unusual situations require unusual measures, and, what do you know, it worked. He met Purna Bahadur and even came back with pen and paper.

With that, I then wrote a letter to Jawaharlalji and sent it through the soldier. Purna Bahadur forwarded it, hidden under the insole of a shoe. It was that letter that Kisunji, perhaps, and Balchandra took with them when they went to meet Jawaharlalji. Tears came to Jawaharlalji’s eyes when he read that letter.

Now that I had paper to write on, the soldier thought that I was helping him. He was a Tamang, in fact, one of the priestly clan, a Lama. He said, “I know *tantra-mantra*, and I will do *tantra-mantra* to have you released.” He asked for two eggs, a bit of uncooked rice and some other material for the ritual.

I replied, “Where can I get you all that? Get all you need from Purna Bahadur. How much money do you need?”

“Four rupees,” he said, and I replied, “I will write to Purna Bahadur and you can collect the stuff from him.”

Purna Bahadur sent me a book of *Jataka* tales. I had a problem hiding it, so I called the jailer and said I wanted a bigger wood-stove. Although the smaller one had been quite adequate, they now built a bigger one. I took

out a brick from it, and in the hollow I stored my book, paper, pencil and money. That is how I kept them hidden in that small room.

Now that I was able to write and receive letters, I finally felt in touch with the outside world. But I was in a bad mental state. Other than that young Tamang, I had no contact with anyone. With him, too, I could talk only when it was his turn of duty. Sometimes, he would disappear for a fortnight, a month. I was in quite a psychological state, and thought I would go mad and die if this went on. I therefore decided to go on a fast, for at least then I would die having created a stir and there would be some political impact. I had by then lost track of how many days I had been in jail. Through Purna Bahadur, I had some link with the outside, but even he was unable to send me useful information. On occasion, he would send me the papers.

I learnt that Subarna Shumshere had started a party that was attacking me severely. I was surprised, for here I was suffering under such conditions, while *Nepal Pukar*, the paper they put out, was reporting that I had joined hands with Mohan Shumshere. The party was known as Democratic Congress, with Mahendra Bikram Shah as president and Surya Babu as secretary. I believe it had the blessings of India. While I was rotting there in jail, the paper reported that B.P. Koirala had been bought over. The news clipping came to me from Purna Bahadur via the soldier.

And so I decided to go on a fast. I was wondering which day to start. It was important to send information out, but that soldier seemed to be off duty. Near my cell, there were several other rooms, and in one of them the jailer kept his chickens. I knew this because I used to hear the birds when they were let out. Two of the other rooms were used to store the jail's supply of firewood, and I could hear the prisoners make a racket as they emerged to collect the wood. I called out to one of them and said, "Listen, go to the jail authorities and tell them that I will start a fast on the day of Akshaya Tritiya."

"Okay, I will tell them," a voice replied. I do not know if he relayed the information or not. Fortunately, a week or so later that Tamang soldier was back after a long gap. Through him, I sent information that I would start my fast on the day of Akshaya Tritiya. I think it was the April or May of 1948, the hot season, when I started my fast.

The jail authorities acted as if nothing was up, and kept sending me my daily rations for about eight days. I was completely alone, and diarrhoeal. I had to go ten, fifteen, twenty times a day. I used to pass thin stool, with some blood, and it was not easy. Eight days went by in that manner. On the eighth day, the jailer came and opened the door. Feigning

ignorance, he exclaimed, "What's this? You have not eaten, not done nothing."

I replied, "I have been fasting since Akshaya Tritiya."

He said, "Now, now, you cannot do that. How can you do something which can kill you?" He did everything he could to try and dissuade me.

He looked at the blood on the floor, and asked, "What's this?" He then brought a doctor, who said I should take medication. But I replied, "I will not take medicine. Look at the way they are treating a prisoner. My fast is a protest. They have kept me in this inhumane situation for the last six months. I am allowed no letters, and do not even get to see another person's face." The doctor told the jailer, "If he will not accept treatment, what's the sense in my coming?" He departed, and for a couple of days there was no activity.

I had had a meal the evening before I started the fast. The first day, I faced great pain. After the third day, the pain began to diminish. I discovered that the real difficulty during a fast is limited to the first few days. On the second or third day, even a whiff of cooking aroma from somewhere would bring great pangs of hunger. Later on, however, there was no such feeling. It was after ten or twelve days, I think, that Girija and Tarini were brought to see me. They themselves had been in jail since the year 2004 (1947).

The two were dressed in white. They were still being put up at that house meant for Juddha Shumshere's daughter and had been enjoying the same facilities as before. Their diet included mutton and so on. Meanwhile, here I was, relegated to this dungeon. They were quite shocked by all this. There was no netting on the bed, and mosquitoes were about. Girija sat towards my head and Tarini down by my feet. They had been told, "Your brother is about to die; try and make him understand."

My fast seemed to have received extensive publicity in India, so my brothers told me, "There is no sense in breaking your fast. The government is about to buckle under." That's what they said, but my condition was not good. They leant forward as if to massage my legs and whispered, "We were brought here just to try and convince you to give up the fast, but continue if you can. There is great pressure on the prime minister to set you free." I replied, "Whatever you say, I am in my fast. There is no need for you to even come visit, and no need to try and persuade me. You may go."

And so Girija and Tarini left, and afterwards, Colonel Chandra Bahadur Thapa and Sardar Upendra Purush Dhakal arrived. They always came together, and tried alternately to woo or threaten me: "If you die, it actually

makes things easier. The dust that would have to be picked up with a broom will just be blown away by the wind." That was the first time I had heard that expression. Or they would say, "What difference does it make? There are many who die in the process of governance."

Tarini and Girija started to come daily, and this encouraged me somewhat. But then four or five days later they stopped coming, perhaps because the authorities decided they were making no headway with me. They were not brought thereafter. Meanwhile, my stomach pains had disappeared, as well as had diarrhoea. I drank only water. The extreme pain of the first eight or ten days had faded. Thus I remained for about 20 days.

At about the same time, in India, Jayaprakash Narayan had fallen ill with some problem with his leg. He was hospitalised in Patna, and Sushila went to him and said, "We hear that BP is about to die. It has been so many days." Some news must also have reached him from Tarini and others as well. Jayaprakash Narayan telephoned Jawaharlal from the hospital itself, saying that BP's life must be saved. Jawaharlalji is said to have told him, "I am doing whatever is required at the diplomatic level. In my opinion, Mrs Sushila Koirala should go to Kathmandu."

To that, Jayaprakashji replied, "How will she go? She will not be allowed to meet him. Besides, what if she is put in jail as well?"

"No, I will see to it that that does not happen," Jawaharlalji replied, and he either sent a message to the prime minister through the Indian ambassador, or he picked up the telephone himself. He told Mohan Shumshere, "BP's wife is coming. Let him meet his relations. Also, give guarantees of security and permission for a plane to land."

There was no airfield here although there was a big field. Jawaharlalji asked the Bihar government for an airplane, and it was arranged. Now, Bijaya Shumshere suddenly faced some difficulty. The plane would be carrying family members, and the moral pressure would be great the moment it landed. So they made an excuse: "We cannot advise Mrs Koirala to come by air. The landing ground is wet because of the rains and cannot be used."

The Bihar government was willing to provide a plane if Sushila was ready to fly, saying that they would support her effort to meet her husband.

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While all that was happening, I was already 20-22 days into my fast. I noticed that, working night and day, within 24 hours they had erected a new house within the jail compound. Essentially, it consisted of one large room. They removed the water tap that was there. I could hear the construction workers go by, and knew that a building was coming up. Its floor had wooden parqueting, and it had three or four windows. It was whitewashed.

On the 22nd or 23rd day of my fast, they moved me into that house. It was a bright room. I had clothes to change into, pyjamas and a *kurta* ordered from somewhere by my brothers Tarini and Girija. It being the hot season, I was given a clean, light quilt. A carpet was spread on the floor. On the 24th day, I think it was, I fainted. Three doctors visited me; one of them was Siddhi Mani Dixit. The other two were Bharat Raj Baidya from Biratnagar and Dr Mahendra Prasad from here. These two began coming regularly. Dr Dixit used to come sometimes, perhaps once a week, check me out and then leave. I received these visits only after I was moved to the new place, not before.

So, I fainted on the 24th day. When I regained consciousness, I saw that both my legs were in a sling and I was being given a saline drip. I also received news that my wife and family had arrived. They had arrived in Kathmandu at about 5 or 6 pm, having walked from the plains, and were being put up at the Tripureswar guest-house. But it being an inauspicious Tuesday, the Maharaja was reluctant to allow the family to meet me. He sent someone to ask whether it would be okay to meet the next day. This task, too, was assigned to that same couple, Chandra Bahadur Thapa and Upendra Purush—they were like the film comics Laurel and Hardy.

I said, "No, I will meet them today."

The Maharaja's emissaries replied, "In which case, you may meet them when the stars are up."

And so they came after nightfall. I think I was in the same position when they came, with a saline drip attached. The doctor told me, "Do not get too excited. Your heart condition is deteriorating. Try not to speak too much. Let them observe you and depart. Try not to do anything else."

"Okay," I said.

They came up to the door, but were not allowed in. Sushila had come, as had Koshu, Bunu, Mother and Prakash. Prakash was allowed to come upstairs.

“How are you?” Mother asked.

I replied, “I am okay.”

After standing there for a while, they all left. Their arrival gave me a small extra amount of willpower. However, my condition having worsened that night, they put me on a stretcher and took me away from the jail in a truck. One doctor, Bharat, was checking my pulse and another was also present. Slowly, taking an hour and a half, they carried me on the stretcher to where Tarini and the others were kept. My mother and family were notified that I was there. They also told Mother and family, “Now he is under your care.” My mother, who had arrived at night, responded together with the others, “No, until he is released, he is the responsibility of the government.”

The authorities had made arrangements for mother and others, but they refused to stay, and at around midnight they returned to the guest-house. Sushila said, “Mother, let us stay here.” But Mother disagreed, “My son is practically on his deathbed, and they say he is our responsibility. As long as my son is in the government’s custody, the government is answerable to his condition.” She was firm. She was allowed to meet me daily, and would come, stay for a while, and leave.

Narendra Mani went to meet her. At that time, he was perhaps a secretary to Mohan Shumshere. He told her, “I am a relation of yours. I have come because I am worried.” Mother replied, “You have come here from the side of the government. Do not talk to me about relationships. You are one of the enemy.” They talked some more. He showed affection towards Bunu and called her “Bunu-nani,” but the discussion was not useful.

It was then decided that the family should meet Mohan Shumshere himself; either Narendra Mani had suggested it or it was Mother herself. My fast was on its 27th day. After much cajoling, the prime minister agreed to a meeting, so Mother, Sushila and Bunu went over to Singha Darbar. Mohan Shumshere was just emerging from his *puja* room and was putting on a white wrap. He met them standing up.

Bijaya Shumshere, who had taken them in, announced, “Bishweshwar’s mother and wife are here.”

When Mohan Shumshere repeated the same line to her—“Now your son is in your care”—my Mother had an argument with him. She said, “He is your responsibility as long as you do not release him. If he dies, the government will be to blame.”

“Doesn’t this government deserve some respect?” Mohan Shumshere responded angrily.

My mother retorted, bravely, "My son is deserving of much more respect than this dictatorial government."

"In which case your son will die!"

Mother retorted, "I cremated my husband in this place, and I have come now to cremate my son. You do not have to threaten me."

Mohan Shumshere had no words for that, and he turned to Bijaya Shumshere, "I knew this would happen, which is why I did not want to meet them in the first place, but you kept insisting."

That was the end of the discussion. Death was obviously the only option now. The doctor began coming in daily. I was jailed together with Tarini and the others, but while they were held in the same way as before, my situation was a little more open. It was as if I was partially released, and partially still in custody. On the 27th or 28th day, Mother asked Siddhi Mani about my condition. She used to say that he was a heartless kind of person. Perhaps Siddhi Mani reported that I was not expected to survive, for Mohan Shumshere sent me a message, "You are now free."

I had sought to meet Mohan Shumshere earlier, and now again I sent him word, repeating the same request. His reply was, "I will meet you, but first you recover."

They then started paying attention to my health. The doctor's suggestion was that a long period of fasting should be broken with fruit juice, whereas the *vaidya* apparently favoured *daal*, because this also gave strength. I was asked to make a choice and I replied I did not care. And so they fed me *daal*, but I also had fruit juice. For a day or two, that was all I took in. Since I could not walk, they would carry me outside to meet my mother and the others. Suddenly, there were people coming to meet me, relatives and others. Tarini and the others were kept right there, but they were not allowed to see anyone. That was something interesting.

I was able to walk around in another 12 days or so. Then those two arrived once again, at midnight. "Did you not say that you wanted to meet Maharaja at Singha Darbar? We have come to get you." They had come in a limousine, and I went with them. I got out of the car beneath the flag at Singha Darbar, and Narendra Mani was there waiting at the top of the stairs. He led me in, while Chandra Bahadur and Upendra Purush remained downstairs. There were three folding chairs, with Mohan Shumshere seated in the middle one, Sharada Shumshere on the right and Bijaya Shumshere on the left. A rug had been laid out for me, and I was asked to sit. I greeted them with joined palms as I sat on the rug.

Mohan Shumshere started the conversation, "You dare to try and

disrupt the country's system and yet do not even understand our customs. Don't you know how to greet me?"

"But I have shown you great respect."

"Here, Bahuns do *swasti*," said Mohan Shumshere, indicating with his cupped hands how it was done.

"I believe that my joined palms, too, showed full respect. I do not think I showed disrespect to Your Highness."

I do not know if at that time I knew honorifics like 'sarkar', 'hukum', 'Your Highness', but later I did learn to use them, it seems.

"And so, is it true that you are planning to take over the government and the throne?" Mohan Shumshere demanded.

I said, "That is not true. We seek civil liberties, which are now being enjoyed by people all over the world, and for which there are wars going on."

"Are you not trying to usurp the position under this flag?"

"No, Your Highness will remain in place. But we have to have civil liberties, and this government must become answerable to the people."

"You might think that you will get to rule. But no one hands over a government just because young upstarts like you make a little bit of noise. To rule, you have to have this destiny written on your forehead," said Mohan Shumshere, indicating his brow with his fingers.

I said, "I do not know about any writing on my forehead, but we have not asked for control of the state."

"You might be thinking that I released you under pressure from Jawaharlal Nehru. I have done no such thing. I did it purely because the doctor said that a Bahun's son was about to die."

I said, "The problem will not be solved merely with my release. My life is saved, to be sure, but our demand is civil rights. What about that?"

"That is for me to decide. I know well what I have to do. I am not going to do anything just because of the noise you all make. I have not released you under pressure from any quarter."

We argued thus for about half an hour. After that, he asked me to leave.

That meeting was held at night. The next day, arrangements began for my departure together with Mother and the others. Back then, we used to have the *tamdaan*, in which you sat as on a chair and were carried by four men. When I said I could not go on one of those, from the darbar they sent over something called a 'carpet'. It was in the shape of a boat, like a *doli*.

Early the next morning, before setting off, I arrived where Mother and the others were staying. A very interesting thing happened there. An astrologer arrived, someone who had been jailed together with

Father and whom Mother respected greatly. It seems he had even predicted the day that Father would die. His name was Gajadhar Pandit, from Ilam. At one time, he has been like the royal astrologer of this place. My mother told me, "He is a great *pandit* and I trust him. Show him your hand."

He turned to me and said, "I have seen your horoscope. Think of a question that you want an answer to, and I will give you a response." I liked the idea, and formulated the question: "The democratic struggle that I am engaged in, when will we achieve success?" His reply was, "Your goal will be achieved in a year to two years. You will be offered a big position. If you refuse that, you will later attain even greater office. If you accept the offer, it will create an obstacle for the higher office." He did not elaborate.

When he said that our goal would be achieved within two years, at that time no one would have imagined that Mohan Shumshere would be ousted so quickly. I myself had not considered it. And then he had referred to my achieving high office, and the matter of not taking it the first time around. That could have been reference to the position of home minister or prime minister. However, that was just an interesting aside, nothing more.

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After that, we left Kathmandu. This has been my personal story, let us say. Meanwhile, the movement led by the Nepali Congress was continuing. There would be meetings organised, some at the Nepal-India border, and some, although this was difficult to do, inside the country. We had many people in jail. I suggested that we suspend the movement for a while to see what action Mohan Shumshere would take.

After I was jailed, Thuldaju once again became the president of the party, and he stayed in Jogbani. Hora Prasad was very close to him. There was a lot of discussion about the struggle and about press and publicity, but nothing concrete was happening. The ideas of genuine democracy, were, however, becoming popular. We were helped in this by the Indian press, particularly Bihar's *The Searchlight*. Ram Rao, its editor, provided me great support.

After I was released, I think it was in June 1949, the year passed just like that. After leaving jail, I went once to Bombay for a medical checkup. That year was spent attending Working Committee meetings; travelling

to Calcutta, Darjeeling and elsewhere; sending people and pamphlets into Nepal; and so on.

Back in the year 2004 (BS), when I was first imprisoned, there was a movement called 'Jayatu Sanskritam' (Victory to Sanksrit) in Nepal. This had begun as a students' protest related to hostel arrangements but had evolved into a political agitation. After they were evicted from the hostel, the students all joined the Nepali Congress—Kashinath Gautam, Sri Bhadra, Rajeswar Devkota, and some others. They came from villages, and therefore had wide-ranging contacts in the hills. One of them, Kashinath Gautam, would travel like a porter through his district, his *doko* full of our literature. That is how we were working at that time.

Then Surya Prasadji came to me on behalf of Subarna Shumshere, proposing that we merge our parties. We called ourselves the Nepali National Congress at that time, and they were the Nepali Democratic Congress. They wanted to join forces. I have already said how they had attacked me while I was in jail. I told Surya Prasadji, "Fine, I have no problem with the proposal."

Our work at that point was concentrated on distributing pamphlets inside Nepal, developing contacts, and establishing local committees wherever possible. There were quite a few committees along the border, but we had also made some progress in the hills, for example, through Kashinath Gautam's work in Gulmi, Palpa, Arghakhanchi and Ridi. As far as the overall movement was concerned, for the moment it was limited to distributing literature. But there were some brave individuals who had joined politics at that time; even today there are some such people around. Those who will pick up the gun and fight for a cause are obviously brave.

Dr K.I. Singh also joined us from his base in Nautanwa, where he had his practice. Slowly, our party's character began to reflect more and more of Nepal, whereas earlier we had had a stronger base in Darjeeling and Calcutta. With the arrival of the Jayatu Sanskritam activists and others, we finally began to make inroads into Nepal. In the tarai, we had people like Rameshwar Prasad Singh, Pathak, and others. Kashi Prasad Srivastava was also with us.

Then the matter of the merger came up, and I said it was a good idea but that it would have to be discussed with Matrika Babu, our president. Surya Babu asked me to come along, so he and I went to Jogbani. There, we decided that the two working committees would meet separately and come up with a plan for assimilation. Three main points to be decided were: What would the flag be? Who would be president? And, finally, what would we name the amalgamated party? My own concerns were

centred on who would appoint the officers within the party, such as the secretary.

Ganesh Manji was of the view that, whatever else, our own flag must remain as people had died for it. This was important to him. About the name, I suggested that we would drop one term each from the two existing party names, and call the new party simply the Nepali Congress. Ganesh Manji remained dissatisfied with this solution for a long time. Because it was decided that the president of the amalgamated party should be our party president, Matrika Babu got the position. If it had been merely stated that the president should come from our side, my name would have been proposed. During the negotiations, the people from our party insisted that our president get the post. The other side too was happier with Thuldaju, as they found him friendlier than me. Some persons from their side said that this decision was unfortunate and later it did indeed seem that way, this propping up of a token person to lead the organisation.

Our flag had a complicated design, with stripes of white, green and yellow. It was very hard to make. On the other hand, they had a good and simple design, with red bands on two sides, and a white middle with four stars. I said that that was very nice. After all these points were thrashed out, a conference was held at the Tiger Cinema Hall in Calcutta, which was owned by Mahabir Shumshere. Thuldaju's name was proposed, and then there was discussion a regarding the flag, where I made my suggestion. Even Girija came forward in opposition, saying, "No, the flag to be used must be our original one." But later, it was decided to go along with what was proposed.

And so the two parties were united that April, and the Nepali Congress was established in Calcutta. Matrika Babu became president, and perhaps Mahendra Bikram Shah, from the other side, was appointed secretary. Balchandra Sharma, our secretary, was crestfallen at that because it was he who had done all the reading, writing and organisational work. He was a very capable man, and I openly spoke out for him, which led to some differences. K.I. Singh, too, was unhappy about the decisions, but Subarnaji somehow managed to mollify him. The party office then moved to Benaras, and after that we had no lack of funds.

I remember a very personal and touching event. There were differences between us and the Democratic Congress. They were rather foppish, and used to travel first class in the trains. We, on the other hand, worked under much hardship. After the merger, our people said that we should maintain our old style and be careful; otherwise, we might go soft. When it was time to head back to Benaras after the Calcutta conference, Matrika

Babu said, "We must all go in third class, otherwise it will seem as if the money has got to us."

I had always preferred to travel comfortably, whatever my condition. This was because if I did not get a good night's sleep, I would be useless for the following two days. That was why I always travelled second class, or "inter class". I always used to insist, "I will not travel third class." Knowing this, Kisunji said, "We will make all the arrangements for you to sleep comfortably. We will take over the compartment before the train enters the platform, and make sure that your suitcase and bedding are all in place." With that assurance, I agreed to travel third class.

I had a little bit of a cold, and then there was my chronic throat problem. So we arrived at Howrah Station, greeted by its teeming crowds. We were to travel by the Punjab Mail, third class, and the train came slowly along the platform. The doors had not even opened and people were already entering by way of the windows. Kisunji pushed me through a window and I fell inside. Coming through the window I had fallen straight into the lap of a rather large Marwari lady. I remember well, her husband's verbal lashing, "Can't you see? Are you blind? How dare you sit on a woman's lap!" My friends came in, and they, too, got involved in the altercation.

Those days, I used to wear a pocket watch with a gold chain, and dress very smartly in jodhpurs and *kurta*, a jacket of coarse silk, and sandals. In the melee, while being shoved inside, my sandals had fallen between the platform and the railway carriage. And so my sandals were gone. I did not know where my spectacles had ended up either. With great difficulty my friends were able to arrange some sleeping space for me on the top bunk meant for luggage. There was so little space between the rack and the ceiling that one felt suffocated, but that's where I had to stay, having lost my sandals and spectacles. Arriving in Benaras, I fell ill. I said, "In the final analysis, it would have been cheaper if I had come second class."

What I am trying to illustrate is how we had begun to give importance to superficial things as we were engaged in uniting with Subarnaji and his friends. After that, once Subarnaji had called me to Calcutta. He was in the air-conditioned office in his Kanak Building, and his wife was with him. He said, "Listen, we must conduct an armed revolution. Our leader is too Gandhian. How will it work?" I said, "Do not worry about that. Let him speak like a Gandhian; we can get organised on the side. All we need is money." He replied, "We tried hard, but could not access any arms. If possible, you and I should take charge of the department

dealing with weapons. Don't worry about funds."

His wife and sister were both present, and his wife brought some coffee. Subarnaji continued, "Lakhs of my money have been spent trying to get arms. Surya Prasad says we can get the weapons there, and we go scurrying over. Mahabir has an aircraft, and we would be told to fly it over. The plane would go and wait for two days. He would then say that we should drop the plan because the police were all around. Next, he would say that the weapons were kept in Ram Nagar. He said all kinds of things, we spent lakhs, but the work was not done."

I replied, "I have been touch with the Burmese. They will give us reliable assistance. We could get arms here if we looked around. But from Burma, it is confirmed." Our activities were expanding swiftly at the time that Subarnaji and I began making contacts for weaponry. When I met them, the Burmese had suggested that we send over a specialist. We decided to send Subarnaji's nephew, Thirbam Malla, who died later in Birganj. He had just graduated from military training in Dehra Dun, which did not really make him an 'expert' but we decided to send him anyway. Because he was purely a military man, we also sent the Socialist Party's Bhola Chatterjee along with him. It was since then that Chatterjee has been involved with us.

Bhola Chatterjee took along a letter from Jayaprakash Narayan and Lohia, asking the Burmese to help us, as well as an introduction from me. The Burmese said that they would help, that they would give one consignment of arms free and that they would provide another consignment at cost price. This was what they had also told me. We were now reassured as far as weaponry was concerned.

The Burmese said that they would bring the arms to Rangoon airport, but its transport from there would be our responsibility. Mahabir Shumshere had a plane, as he used to run an air service in India, before it was nationalised. It was known as Himalayan Aviation. The plane was flown by a Czechoslovak pilot named Bujocowsky, who had stayed back since the time of the Second World War. I spoke to him, and he said he was ready to fly over and bring back the consignment. This was how we arranged to bring the guns from Burma although I cannot recall the exact chronology of events and dates.

Now the plans for armed revolution were more or less confirmed. Talk about this began in April 1950 or so. Contact was made with the king. When I came secretly to Kathmandu, the king's sons had sent a message saying they wanted to meet. However, they grew fearful and did not meet us. While we, the Nepali National Congress, had therefore not been in

touch with the king, the Democratic Congress had made contact. It seemed that India was giving the Democratic Congress some support. Meanwhile, because of their Calcutta base, it was easy for them to meet the people from the royal palace as they came and went. Subarnaji said to me, "I have some contact with the royal palace. Should we send them a communication?" I told him to go ahead.

What was going to be the position of the king when we began our armed revolution? If we fought in the name of the king, they would certainly put him in custody. For that reason, we had to spirit him away. The easiest would be to fly him out in a helicopter, if we could get it to the airport. We would be able to form a government after we got the king to Palpa. We would get India to recognise the rebel government while continuing to proceed with the insurrection. That was the plan, and for it to succeed it was important to get the commander-in-chief of Palpa on our side. Who would go to Palpa?

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We had a meeting to attend, for which you had to go by way of Thutibari. On the rail line from Gorakhpur to Bagaha there was a stop where our party's Central Committee was meeting. After that meeting, I went secretly up to Palpa, with the contact arranged by Subarnaji. There were these links between the Ranas, particularly the 'C-class' Ranas. In this case, they were both C-class. The Palpa commander-in-chief's son had come to Calcutta, and Subarnaji had introduced him to me. I asked then if I could make it to Palpa and he had replied, "Of course, you can. I come and go regularly."

He was engaged in some illegal enterprise. The value of silver rupees had gone up, and he had been coming to Calcutta on something related to that. He said, "I will take you up with me," and so it was decided. He instructed me, "Get to Nautanwa at 12 midnight. A man will come to take you to where Hitman Sherchan's godown is. A jeep will come to pick you up there." As arranged, the man came to Nautanwa and he took me to Hitman Sherchan's storage yard. At about 2 am, my contact himself came in a jeep and I was on my way. We were stopped at the border near Bhairahawa and asked to identify ourselves. He gave his name, upon which we were allowed to pass. We then went straight to Butwal Khasyauli, at the base of the mountains.

All his family lived there in Butwal, in a rundown but cleanly kept

bungalow. They greeted me graciously, and he introduced me to his wives. I stayed there that whole day. The next day, early in the morning, a horse and an attendant were assigned to me and they bade me good-bye. Palpa is a full day's journey from Khasyauli. Passing one village, I continued on. There is a large, flat valley beneath the town of Palpa Tansen, full of mango groves. There was a man waiting for me there, and I was made to tarry until evening. The horse and attendant returned to Khasyauli.

My guide took me up the trail and delivered me to Khajanti, who was a confidante of the commander-in-chief of Palpa. After I was settled there, word was sent to the commander-in-chief, who lived outside the town in a camp on the hill above. He was a sophisticated gentleman and lived in the company of pretty women. He was also very rich. To mark my arrival, he had outdone himself and planned a feast. I spoke to him for a while after the meal and put my proposal before him. I made two points: that he should hand over the thousand or twelve hundred guns he had with him; and that he should arrange for the king's stay if we were to bring him there.

He replied, "Of course we will be able to do that. Why not? You can tell Subarnaji he can rely on me." He added, "You have trusted me; for that I am grateful." He then introduced me to his entire family, including his grandsons and granddaughters. He said, "You will not be staying at the Khajanti's now." He had a doctor named Tribeni Prasad Pradhan who had built a house with a spanking new bathroom. The commander insisted that I shift to that house; I did, and stayed there the whole of next day. A horse and an attendant arrived early the following day, and I reached Butwal that night. The next day, the same jeep took me to the station to catch the midnight train. My ticket was bought for me, and I sat in the first-class compartment. My guide left after ensuring that everything was in order.

There, in the cabin, was a man from the Intelligence Department. His name was T.B. Malla, and he later died in jail. He was a remarkable man, with quite a history of his own. He was a man of the Nepali government, a confidante of Mohan Shumshere's. Upon seeing me, he asked, "Koiralaji, where are you coming from?" He had recognised me without difficulty, and addressed me in English.

I said, "How did you recognise me? How did you know I am Koirala?"

"I have seen your pictures; that's how. I know you are Koiralaji. Where are you coming from?"

I replied, "I went to see some friends in the border area. I have been touring the region."

He asked, "But who was that man who bought your ticket?"

"I do not know him. There was a crowd at the counter, so I asked him to buy me my ticket. I am new here, so I do not know him."

"That's fine. I know a lot about you and your activities."

I asked him, "And what about you?"

He said, "I know you will be curious. I am T.B. Malla. Ask anyone around here, they will tell you who I am."

The discussion was conducted in English. We travelled together to Gorakhpur, where we got off at 5 or 6 pm. He left the station, while I went into the retiring room and had a bath.

I went on to Calcutta, and I asked Thuldaju to come over and we met there. Before us lay the great challenge of getting King Tribhuvan to Palpa. There could be one of many ways, and it was important to be in touch with the king. A particular brand of cigarette used be sent for the king from Calcutta. We emptied a stick of tobacco and placed a message in Nepali paper in a tight little roll inside it. The two ends we covered with tobacco. Subarnaji was resourceful in arranging for the proper packing and sealing of the cigarette packet. It was also arranged that a person going in and out of the royal palace would present the king with the cigarettes. This was one way of maintaining contact, and Subarnaji employed it.

We investigated how long it takes to go from the royal palace in Kathmandu to the airfield—about seven or eight minutes. The getaway helicopter could be airborne before the troops could be alerted. We had all the plans, which Subarnaji was quite good at making. However, as hard as we tried, we could not get a helicopter. The Indian government's response was, "How can we give you one if we do not have a helicopter?" Indeed, a helicopter was hard to get back then, and of course the Indian government would not have provided it even if they had had one. This was because India would want to keep King Tribhuvan under its control, rather than let us have access to him.

I do believe that India was in regular contact with the king. It was of utmost importance under whose control the king would be, and this was a subject for sober reflection between Subarnaji and me. The others were hardly bothered about the need to keep the king with us and in our hold.

We did not have much in the way of international contacts, and our helicopter requirement was not something that we could shout about from the rooftops. Besides, to arrive in Kathmandu, a helicopter would have to overfly Indian airspace. These were all the challenges we faced.

There was one more idea, which was mine. We could send a few people to Kathmandu, and when the king emerged from the royal palace we would contact him and spirit him away. We would take him to Gadhi, where we would have people waiting. There would be little fighting. This was another plan we toyed with.

Under the leadership of Ganesh Manji, Sundar Raj Chalise and one other person (who later became governor) came to Kathmandu. They brought along some weapons. Somehow, they were found out and were all arrested. Ganesh Manji managed to escape, but he was caught again before he crossed the border. They were beaten and very badly treated; that is quite a story in itself. The king got scared after this failed attempt, thinking we were amateurs. Meanwhile, India had already made contact with the royal palace. A plan was hatched that the king would drive into the Indian embassy, from where he would go to India. As soon as the king entered the Indian embassy, we lost all contact with him.

I was in Patna then, distraught that our people had been caught and that the plan had failed. I used to take a lot of risks. In the house where I stayed in Patna, I had broadcasting and receiving equipment, and two specialists, one named Mehra and one other person. We could monitor the wireless transmission from the Indian embassy in Kathmandu. One day, suddenly, we heard on the wireless, "Expect an important notice at 9 am or 11 am." Keeping the set on, we waited for the transmission. Suddenly, we heard, "The king has entered the Indian embassy and has taken refuge together with his entire family."

As soon as I heard that, I declared, "Now the matter has gone out of our hands." I immediately telephoned Jayaprakashji. He and Lohia were in Patna at a meeting. They called me over, and Lohia said, "This is a crucial turning point. You have to issue a statement immediately. Until now, nobody knows what has happened. Your statement and news of the king's escape will be printed simultaneously. It will become international news, and will be publicised overseas as well. The king having fled, the constitutionality of Mohan Shumshere's government is now over. It is now an illegitimate government."

I issued a statement. That was one of my most significant statements, which should be read with the context in mind. The king fled in November. I had emphasised the fact that the government in Kathmandu was the king's, and now the monarch's action itself had made the government unlawful.

Mohan Shumshere then put forward Gyanendra as king. He brought together all his brothers and courtiers and had them pay respects to the

young prince. Coins were minted in his name, and Mohan Shumshere did everything else required to complete the rituals of coronation.

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It now became necessary to accelerate our struggle. The king was out of our reach, with India preventing access to him. The king was under India's control, and why would India let us meet him? Nor was the king himself showing any inclination to meet us. I went to Delhi many times and did meet his sons, but never King Tribhuvan. The king's private secretary was Dayaram Bhakta Mathema, a very important figure of that period. He always insisted that the king was busy.

We started our armed revolution. For weapons, we sent the plane over to Burma with Bujocowsky. He flew back with the weapons, but the problem was where to have them dropped. Everything had to be thought through: for example, the matter of locating our radio transmitter. Since no one could come up with a solution, I volunteered to keep it. I was staying in all of two rooms in Patna, at a place called Cozy Nook. One room was thus filled with radio equipment, and visitors had to sit amidst it. They all knew that this was a powerful transmitter, meant to support the revolution in Nepal.

None of our friends would show any willingness to take up dangerous assignments. Surya Babu, for example, would send a message that there were some arms to be picked up at such and such a place. I was the one who would have to go, but invariably it would be a hoax. There would be nothing there.

Let me also recount another episode concerning Surya Babu. He had reported that there were some arms with Bhadraka Raja; there was a state in UP called Bhadri, and he was its ruler. Later, I developed a good relationship with him; he was governor of Himachal Pradesh when I was on a state visit to India. Surya Babu's group was with Kidwai, with whom he had spent time in jail, and Bhadri was from the same circle. Surya Babu's own relationship with Jawaharlalji had been established through Kidwai. In any event, Surya Babu reported that Bhadri had some weapons, but that he was unwilling to hand them to us. So I said, "Surya Babu, write a note to Bhadri. I will go and talk to him."

He wrote a letter and gave it to me sealed. I went over to Bhadri, who came out to greet me as soon as I was announced, "Come on in," he said. He read the letter and turned to me, "This letter is fine, but today

he called me to say that this job is not to be done." This angered me greatly, but I kept my cool and said, "But the letter states it clearly." He replied, "No, there must be some new development." The two obviously had a meeting of minds. I came back and scolded Surya Babu soundly, demanding what he was up to.

This is how Surya Babu works, and that was how money was being misused. Once, there was a strike here, and they had come to ask for some money to support it. He gave them a stack of papers cut to the size of bank notes, with a hundred rupee note on each side. There are unending similar stories about him.

Amidst all this, I sent for the weapons from Burma, but we had to find a place to receive the consignment. I knew Bihar had many unused airfields from the time of the world war, and located one at Bihita, near Patna, which had a couple of Nepali *chowkidars*. I instructed Bujocowsky, "Go, bring the arms, and drop them here." He flew out, ostensibly headed for Delhi and reported that he had lost his way. He made his way to Rangoon instead and returned with the crates of weaponry. Subarnaji, myself and one other person went to the Bihita aerodrome with a truck and one smaller vehicle. As we got there, a hubbub arose and the Nepali *chowkidars* came over to see what was up. Subarnaji and I spoke to them in Nepali and told them we had come for a picnic. We asked them to find us some goats: "We will kill the goats and have a picnic."

They said, of course, they would get some goats from a nearby village. We sent them trooping to the village, to buy the animals, rice, *ghiu* and other provisions. They were all at the distant village when the plane arrived, and within ten minutes we had unloaded all the crates and placed them on the truck. The plane departed. The goat party must have seen the plane come and go, but we were already off before they returned.

Then there was the matter of stashing the weapons. There was an empty room beneath my quarters at Cozy Nook and that is where we hid the crates. I then went to meet the chief minister of Bihar, Srikrishna Sinha. He was one of three persons Jawaharlalji had said I could trust totally. The other two were West Bengal Chief Minister Bidhan Chandra Ray and UP Chief Minister Govinda Ballav Pant. He had said, "You can tell them whatever you would tell me."

Remembering that advice, I went over to Srikrishna Sinha, who was given to morning rituals and prayer. He called me in as soon as I got to his place, and I said that I had come to discuss something with him.

"What is it?" he enquired.

"We have a large cache of arms which I want to transfer to the border.

I have come to ask you to please not arrest us as we try to do so."

"So, the weapons are with you?" he asked.

"Yes, we have a quite a large consignment."

He telephoned the inspector general of police and asked him over. He was also a Sinha, and the chief minister told him, "Do you know this gentleman, Mr Sinha?"

"Yes, this is Koiralaji. I know him, a revolutionary."

"Do you know that a large consignment of arms has entered the city? Do you know this?"

"No, sir," replied the IGP, but I could not say whether he was speaking the truth.

I turned to him and said, "I have it at the Cozy Nook. However, I am taking it to the border, for which I need your help. Please do not seize it while we transport it over."

The chief minister then told the IGP, "Sinhaji, see if you can help him."

He replied, "Fine, I will talk to him."

We left together, and talked over the matter once we got home. His suggestion was: "I will go on an inspection tour of the border region and take the consignment with me. I will take it where you ask me to."

I said, "I want some of it in Biratnagar and some in Raxaul."

He said, "I have a special railway compartment, and can take it with me. But you are also free to transport it yourself although that may be dangerous. Someone at the border may seize it. I can hardly tell my police force about it, for it will be difficult for the government if we are exposed."

There is another incident related to our search for weapons. We had learnt that, for a price, there were six boxes containing radio transmission equipment, some rifles and other weapons available in Lucknow. The information was provided by the Palpa's commander-in-chief's grandson, a lawyer. Now, the others did not have the will to go. Thuldaju, for one, was scared of this kind of thing. For example, once we had to get some arms to Patna from Calcutta, where they were kept in a flat in Mahabir Shumshere's mansion. There were two boxes, and Thuldaju was coming from Calcutta. However, this is what he told my sister Bunu: "I will not take those boxes. You take them with you and travel in a different compartment. I am a Gandhian, I cannot travel with those boxes." That is how it was; no one willing to take risks. This was something I never understood.

So Devendra and I went to collect the equipment in Lucknow. We were to receive it after dark, at what was the state's biggest hotel. Narendra Dev was vice-chancellor of Lucknow University, and we stayed with him as

guests. This provided us an appropriate cover. At the appointed hour of midnight, we came back to Narendra Dev's with those boxes, shoved them under our beds and went to sleep. The next morning, there were two men who looked like policemen loitering on the footpath outside the compound. Seeing them, Devendra said, "They look like officers." I looked out and it seemed so. As it was, we were always suspicious under such circumstances.

The two said they had come to meet the vice-chancellor. Acharya Narendra Dev was asleep, so they met him after he was up. We were still trying to understand why these men had arrived so early in the morning. One man in particular, who wore trousers and a bush-shirt and had a stick in hand, we were convinced was an officer. Narendra Dev entered our room after a while, and said, "The district magistrate and superintendent of police have come to meet me. They say that you brought in some arms and equipment overnight."

I was quite embarrassed, and replied, "Yes, we brought in some weapons. As you know, we are collecting arms and equipment. We did not tell you because it was already late at night when we came in."

"That's okay, there is no need to explain yourself. What shall I tell them?" he asked.

I said, "Tell them that it is true that we have some arms, but that they will not be used here."

Narendra Dev came back and said that they wanted to confiscate the boxes.

I replied, "It has been so difficult to collect these arms. How can we part with them now?"

He said, "But they are required to seize any illegal arms they come across."

I said, "Then let's do this: have them ask Govind Ballabh Pant whether we should be arrested or not. Let them do whatever they are instructed to after that. Let them not arrest us while we are in transit, but let them first check with the chief minister."

Narendra Dev conveyed this to the two visitors, but they said it was not possible to get in touch with Govind Ballabh Pant before 10 am. Narendra Dev replied, "So wait till 10 o'clock. They will not go anywhere and the weapons will remain here." They agreed and left, and went over to the chief minister's. Lal Bahadur Shastri was home minister of the state then. The chief minister told them, "Tell BP to meet with the home minister. Do nothing before that." They informed Narendra Dev of Govind Ballabh Pant's instructions.

Lal Bahadur Shastri used to come to his office at 10 or 11 o'clock, and I had been asked to see him at his office. After I explained the matter to him, he gave me a long lecture on non-violence. I responded, "I, too, am in favour of non-violence. I, too, was jailed during the non-violence movement here. Like you, I do not believe in violence, but my party does not believe in non-violence. It is as a simple soldier of the party that I have been collecting arms."

After hearing me out, he said, "Okay then, remove them from here immediately. They will not be seized."

I gave him my word, and said, "We are taking the arms to Patna and want to go by the night train."

"That's fine. Take them on the night train."

"I have one more favour to ask. Please instruct the police people not to harass us at the station or along the way."

Lal Bahadur Shastri replied, "How can I do that? I can tell the SP here, but how can I guarantee your passage from here to Mughal Sarai station and beyond? There is nothing I can do if the customs people come enquiring."

"It would help a bit if the SP were to make some arrangements for us, and we would be on our way," I said.

"Okay, but you had better leave today," he said.

And so we caught the 9 o'clock train. I think the SP must have placed a man in our compartment. Beyond Mughal Sarai would be another jurisdiction. That was how we brought that particular consignment to Patna.

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We soon confronted yet another problem. In executing an armed insurrection, it was not possible to take each and every matter to the Working Committee, as there would be no secrecy in that. We held a conference in Bairginia to resolve the issue, and it became a notable event. We accepted the 'line' of armed revolution at that conference, and also adopted a revolutionary policy. We announced the start of our broad-based armed struggle. I proposed that our president, Matrika Prasad Koirala, should have supreme authority, which K.I. Singh opposed, saying that it would be anti-democratic. But if we were to engage in armed revolt, there was no other way but to place such authority in the hands of Matrika Babu. Many did not like this idea, but it was passed, once again, at my

insistence. So, Matrika Babu was given supreme authority, and he used to claim thereafter that he was the "supreme commander". This happened at my behest.

Of course, all matters dealing with weaponry were handled by Subarnaji and myself, and I had already discussed this with Thuldaju. We would tackle whatever came up, including the question of raising money. We would inform Thuldaju and he would say fine, and agree. That was also how I wanted to work.

There were two aspects to our recruitment of fighters. On one side, there were ex-servicemen and on the other, those who had fought with the Azad Hind forces. Purna Singh and a few others were very important to us. That was how we started to recruit. Of course, Subarnaji had already started enlisting people before he joined us to form the Nepali Congress, so that group was already there.

It was decided that Subarnaji and I would be in charge of armed action in the east, while Mahendra Bikram and Surya Prasad would lead the fighting in the west. This was Matrika Babu's decision because he thought it important to satisfy that faction as well. We, too, did not have a problem with that division either. Later, it would be clear that all the problems on the western front arose due to this leadership, including all the action by elements such as K.I. Singh and Balchandra Sharma.

We organised for the first skirmish: Biswabandhu Thapa, Girija and others made preparations for the occupation of Biratnagar. Uttam Bikram was governor there at the time. Biswabandhu was related to him, so he used to come and go there. Biswabandhu was a bit of a wag, and he apparently told Uttam Bikram that we were about to start something and that they should quietly surrender. For his part, Uttam Bikram had replied wryly, "We will just have to see what happens, won't we?"

Our people started the action as soon as the weapons arrived. I do not know the details of the fighting, for I was in Patna at that time. Perhaps Girija or Biswabandhu could provide the information. There is no doubt that Biswabandhu played a crucial role there. Even Tarini played an important part, surprisingly, for he was never a physical person. Biku, my younger aunt's son, also got very involved. In fact, a bullet got him. None of them knew anything about fighting, but they had a retired military commander with them.

The plan was to occupy the Revenue Collection Office, but they could not bring down its walls, so they all fled towards the east. Running, they went towards Rangeli. There was gunfire in Rangeli as well. Our people were so unprepared for the fight, they did not even know they had to keep

their heads down when the bullets started flying. The commander had to keep shouting at them to dive. We lost some people, and that commander also died. He was hit while he was on the ground.

Biku did not even know he had been hit. Some of those who had fled towards Jogbani had flung their rifles away, and he retrieved six of them and walked the six miles to Jogbani. He fainted only after his friends exclaimed, "Hey, you have blood on you!" A bullet had entered and exited. He was treated and then evacuated to Patna, but after that he was no use on the battlefield. That whole effort in Biratnagar was completely wasted. We realised that the town could be taken over only with a ruse, because the government's troop strength was quite significant even though the barracks was not that big. That is what happened in Biratnagar, and it received much publicity.

Then there was Birganj, where we had concentrated our forces. At first, we had thought that the Biratnagar front would do well, but because of the inexperienced people that action turned out to be somewhat romantic and immature. We failed in Biratnagar, but the one achievement of that misadventure was that it did help spread the news about our revolutionary goals across the villages.

The Birganj action was led by Purna Singh and Thirbam Malla. This was our crack force, and we sent it in to deliver the first real blow to the enemy. Subarnaji was the overall in-charge, and we were staying on the Indian side. The attack began at 3 am at Governor Som Shumshere's mansion and elsewhere. The fire was returned from the governor's, but Thirbam was able to take him prisoner after he surrendered. Later, Thirbam got hit and did not survive. Another unit of ours, which was very good, successfully took the treasury. We were able to capture about 50 lakh rupees, as well as the weapons kept there, which included 250 rifles as well as ammunition. This was a great achievement. The saddest part was Thirbam's death. After the fighting was over, we took his body to the banks of the Sirisiya River near the border, and observed the cremation with full military honours.

Our political activities picked up steam after that. Subarnaji and I represented the high command, and with us were our most able military chiefs, Purna Singh and Yakthumba. I liked Yakthumba a lot, for he was a daring man. It was my belief that, unlike in regular warfare, in revolutionary action you had to make up for various lacks with additional pluck and daring. We certainly did not have the wherewithal for war. Yakthumba was my kind of man and he understood this.

Afterwards, we faced the question of where to store all that we

had captured—rifles, pistols, Mausers, the 50 lakh rupees, as well as gold and silver which was carried back across the border by our fighters that night. We were staying at a place that was like a railway guest-house, where Subarnaji and myself had taken two rooms. They brought the 50 lakh rupees and left it in my room.

Now that we had weapons, money and people, we must escalate our activities in Nepal immediately. That was my plea. We must try to take the fort at Bhimphedi, for it would take at least two or three days before the government sent reinforcements. The enemy had been stunned by our surprise attack and would take time to react. My non-military mind told me that if we captured the fort it would be hard for them to fight us. Yakhumba agreed with me, but it was Subarnaji, the general, rather than I who had studied military strategy. Purna Singh, meanwhile, had served as a senior officer in the Azad Hind force. His point was that we would not be able to attack again with so few resources. He suggested that we leave Birganj and establish our headquarters somewhere in the jungle and build up our strength.

At this time, India again misinformed us. The inspector general of police, whom I had met in Patna, came over. It turned out he was camping there. He said, "We have received information that the army has marched and that it will get here by tomorrow, if not this evening." With this information in hand, obviously my suggestion could not be implemented. As it turned out, that was a big lie. The reinforcements marched from Kathmandu only three or four days later. Going by my proposal, we would have arrived in Bhimphedi the next day, and even made it to the fort above the same day if we had used trucks. We could easily have overcome the 50 or 100 soldiers the Ranas had guarding the fort. Had we taken that strategic point, it would have caused a sensation in Kathmandu. But with the information provided by the Bihar IGP, I, for one, was forced to rethink my suggestion.

Tej Bahadur was also there, and he said, "Let me go to Birganj and find out what the situation is." It turned out there were guns and pistols strewn all over the place.

Gopal Prasad Bhattarai was assigned to Kalaiya, and the town was taken without difficulty. He brought the captured money over in a *gamcha* shawl. The cloth tore and he had quite a time putting all the money back together. The difficulty was in transporting the coins, not so much the notes, and many silver coins were lost in this way. As far as the money collected in Birganj was concerned, I forget how much it was but I recall that it filled one trunk right to the top. But the silver coins

were difficult to transport. When we filled kerosene tins with them, they were too heavy for our men to carry. They asked if they could bring the coins in a *gamcha*, but even then one could carry no more than five or six thousand rupees' worth. When we told them to carry what they could; everything became very disorganised.

There is a small river north of Birganj, just north of Parwanipur, near the railway station. Some of our people died there because my suggestion was rejected. In order to maintain our control over Birganj, we had kept a small force there to hold the front when the Rana forces arrived. Meanwhile, we had decided to take the rest of our weapons and establish our headquarters in the Thori jungle.

All this was happening under Subarnaji's authority, and he had delegated responsibility to two persons. There was a mistake. One was Rameswar Babu, a hunter who knew the jungle, which was very thick back then. He lived near Bettiah and Ram Nagar and was very capable. He had made the arrangements for the jungle camp, and had assigned lookouts to check on all movements. No one was allowed to enter other than our soldiers. The other person was the grandson of Palpa's commander-in-chief. I have not been able to recall his name, but he is very important to the story. Ganesh Manji remembers his name. Giving the responsibility to these two turned out to be a mistake, something I will return to later.

As for the money captured in Birganj, I told Subarnaji, "You should take this money and go to Patna. I will complete the arrangements here and come a day later." He took the money and left, while I remained in Raxaul. I did what I had to, distributing the arms as required and also sending some to Thori. The next day, I left by train for Patna. The soldiers actually did not arrive from Kathmandu for another eight days. When they did, as part of a massive force, they started a massacre. They killed whoever they suspected, and everyone was fleeing. I had tried to prevent this by intercepting the force along the way, up in Bhimphedi. We would have been able to attack them before they could have rallied. But Purna Singh's point was that the attacker has to have two, or was it four, times the strength of the defender. That was his theory, and he was the person commanding our force. I remember telling him, "If that is the case, no insurgent force can ever beat a standing army."

My own view was that a revolutionary fights in the ratio of one-to-hundred; even alone, it is possible for him to defeat a hundred-strong enemy. That is because he is not tied to the rigid strategy which tends to hem in the military, and he can be freewheeling and surprise the enemy to

achieve victory. That was my view. Later, I was praised for taking that position but at that time we could not apply it because Subarnaji was unwilling.

Who knows, perhaps there would have been many more casualties had our side followed my advice, but we would definitely have made it to the *gadhi* above Bhimphedi. To force us out of the fort, they would have had to use the same calculation, and use four times the force we would have had within the fort. Meanwhile, they may not even have sent a large contingent if they believed we already commanded the fort. The government's army would have employed a defensive strategy. For that reason, we should have concentrated our attack on the *gadhi*.

India was not too happy about our military adventure. Why, I cannot say. They provided us with misinformation: "The force has already marched, it is coming today, it will get here by evening, it will arrive early tomorrow..."

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We had a problem with keeping the funds in Patna, so we—Matrika Babu, Subarna Shumshere, Surya Prasad, Mahabir Shumshere and myself—took the money and flew in Mahabir Shumshere's plane to Delhi. We had thought it would be safest to hand over the amount to the king, as this would also do away with the fear of differences arising amongst us. We were also afraid that India might try to confiscate it. I understood the bitter truth about what money can do at that time, for after we brought the amount over, Tej Bahadur Amatyia came forward to claim that he had to have more control over the money. His point seemed to be that the money was from his sector. Rather than get involved in haggling over the matter, we, therefore, decided to just deposit it all with the king.

Our plane from Patna landed in Delhi after dark. As soon as we touched down, we were made to taxi to one corner of the airfield. They trained floodlights on us from all four sides. The chief of the Intelligence Department, someone I knew, a man named Hand, came forward. I think he was also at one point Jawaharlal Nehru's secretary. He came up and said, "We have learnt that this plane contains looted wealth. Please remain in your seats while we conduct a search." I had a Mauser pistol with me. Because they could give me trouble for carrying it, I quietly placed it under the seat. They searched all of us one by one and made us get down. They picked up the box containing the 50 lakh rupees and took it away.

A magistrate was called in at about midnight. They separated me from the rest, which was interesting. Surya Prasad quietly took Thuldaju to Jawaharlal Nehru's. I did not know what it was he said before taking him over. I only found out all this later. They kept me there, while the magistrate came and counted the 50 lakh rupees. How long does it take to add up that much money? Two or three persons counted all through the night, and the next day they told me, "You are free to go." Thuldaju had been set free somewhat earlier. I do not know what conversation he had had with Jawaharlalji. I went to meet Jawaharlalji the next day. That money seized by India, meanwhile, was returned to the Nepal government only after the revolution.

I was livid with rage as I went over to Jawaharlalji's, wanting to know what the point of all this was. But my anger was quite useless.

As soon as I met him, I asked him, "Why did you put us in custody?"

Jawaharlal Nehru replied, "All that publicity in the papers saying that you were bringing the money; you put me in a most awkward position!"

"So where are we supposed to take all this money?"

He said, "Couldn't you have kept it in your house? What kind of a revolutionary are you? Could you not have kept 50 lakh rupees in your room? Didn't you have a safe? You could have left it in the same trunk in which you brought it here. If you did not have a Godrej almirah, you could have bought one! What kind of revolutionaries are you? So! You have come to hand it over to the king! Is this the king's revolution or the people's?"

It turned out that he was having some difficulties in the international arena. He had been presenting himself as neutral as far as our campaign was concerned, and the money-transfer had created difficulties. So Jawaharlal Nehru exclaimed angrily, "I should have you in handcuffs!" I, too, managed to get my word in, however.

After that, we got back to our movement. I need not repeat that the struggle was continuing. We cleaned up the east, even though the Biratnagar action turned out a bit too romantic. Uttam Bikram, a very capable person, was the governor there and he had a small garrison that he kept within his compound. He had stocked up on food and there was a tubewell in there for water. A Bren-gun was placed on the roof. By moving its position, they gave the impression that they had three instead of one. They used ammunition very sparingly so that they could last out a long siege. The whole bazaar and the entire district were in our hands, but that one garrison still held out. We found out that he had sent

out a wireless message asking for more arms.

Even though we were finding it difficult to occupy the governor's premises, we had despatched a small force to Jhapa and managed to capture the outpost. Back in Biratnagar, we found out that Uttam Bikram was using the wireless to ask for more arms. Subarnaji, meanwhile, reported that our ammunition was running low and that we did not have more supplies. Yakthumba, who was the military commander there, said, "We do not have ammunition. If they attack and enter at night, we will not be able to repel them." And so we sent someone over to Purniya to see if anyone would sell us bullets, which were selling for eight *annas* or a rupee apiece. But we were unable to gather as much as we needed. We wanted to breach the governor's compound wall by placing an explosive, for which we needed gunpowder. That, too, proved hard to get.

I went to Delhi. I had already had that run-in with Jawaharlalji. Even so, he had said to ask him if we needed help. His secretary then was John Mathai, who was arrogant and mean.

"I have come to meet Jawaharlalji," I told him.

"Why?"

"I have to speak to him personally."

"Tell me, I will relay your message to him."

"No, I have to talk to him myself."

He went into the prime minister's office and returned to say, "He is tackling some urgent matters. Leave a note and come by tomorrow to meet him."

Because he had emerged from Jawaharlalji's office, I felt that Jawaharlalji must have said so. And so I told Mathai that my mission was to seek some weapons and ammunition. I said we also needed some explosives. He fixed up a time for me to meet Jawaharlalji the next day.

As soon as he met me the following day, Jawaharlalji scolded me. "What are you doing, coming to me to ask for hand grenades and ammunition? I will not provide you with the firecrackers you want. And I will have you put in handcuffs!"

I said, "Jawaharlalji, why are you so angry? If you do not wish to help us, then that is your wish, but you have no right to abuse me."

Then he said, "You come to me beating a drum. You tell everyone you meet what you have come to ask for."

I said, "But I have only told you, not anyone else."

"Didn't you tell Mathai?"

"But he is your secretary."

"But I did not give you permission to say this to Mathai," he said.

I replied, "But Mathai Saheb emerged from your room to ask me what it was that I wanted."

He got quite angry, "You do not understand something as simple as this!"

Jawaharlalji did not give us anything, and I returned disheartened. I asked Subarnaji, "What shall we do now?"

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The jute mill in Biratnagar was in our control, and it had a good foundry with expert mechanics. Subarnaji said, "Why don't we prepare a rocket ourselves?" And so we built a 'rocket' there in that foundry, and filled it with gunpowder and so on. We thought it would not go far, but when we tested it, the rocket went all the way to a village which was at quite a distance and exploded. The rocket of Subarnaji's imagination did get made, and once fired it did zoom out and blow up, but it was impossible to fix a range on it. That made it a very dangerous weapon. After all, our assault would take place at close quarters, and it would not do to have a home-made rocket we could not control.

Tarini and some others had the idea of overwhelming the garrison by using sudden force. Picking up a microphone, he shouted, "Stop fighting! You all surrender!" he started walking towards the governor's holdout. We followed, including our soldiers, but were greeted by a spray of bullets. Fortunately, out there on Shahid Maidan there were logs brought in from the jungle, and everyone dove for cover behind them. If they had not been there, we would all have been killed. After being pinned down for hours, we were slowly able to evacuate the field one by one. The day after that failed attempt, or perhaps two days, Tarini and I went to the roof of the bank nearby. Subarnaji was also with us. Suddenly the bren-gun started firing and we all hit the ground. The bullets hit the corner of the terrace above and plaster rained down on us. Over on the other side, Girija and Tarini were taking cover behind a log pile.

That was just another incident, the result of our ignorance. We even tried to win over the enemy with a microphone, and when nothing worked we tried the rocket. But it would go everywhere, including over the road, but not into the governor's compound. So that also did not work. We then hit upon another bright idea: to convert a tractor into a tank by covering it on all sides with metal sheets and to use it to advance and break into the governor's compound. The contraption was ready in five or six days. It

was a 'caterpillar' type of tractor, without rubber tyres. The driver of that tractor had come to visit me the other day; he is quite old now. He said he had suffered a lot.

The governor's people saw the tractor and thought it was a tank. At first, they fired furiously, but that had no effect on it. Our machine just ploughed ahead and gave the wall a push. It came crashing down. Then the machine turned, went to the other side of the compound, and with a push brought down another portion of the wall. Then it levelled the rubble. We were watching all this from afar, and before long there was a white flag flying from the governor's mansion.

Our soldiers had been waiting, and when the flag of surrender went up they ran in under Yakthumba's command. As they went in, they saw a son of Uttam Bikram's rushing northwards, together with some money and other stuff. He was shot and died on the spot. Another son of Uttam Bikram's received a bullet and fell down the stairs. Stepping on him, our troops went up the stairs. Our men had arrived in a fearful rush. They were very angry, and I was worried about what they might do. After they had surrendered, we should have given the enemy refuge. I arrived running, and I saw the governor, his wife and daughters, and another three or four persons gathered in the courtyard, trembling with fear. It was a winter's day, and it was already evening.

Yakthumba was beside himself, shouting, "That man must be cut down." I tried to pacify him, and ordered, "Yakthumba, you get out of here. These people must be given protection." I then turned to them, saying, "You do not have to be afraid." I pushed Yakthumba away from there. In his fury, he hit a wooden pole with his khukuri and it got stuck and remained there, shaking. That was how agitated he was. Then I saw the young man who had been hit by a bullet on the stairs being stepped on by our soldiers. I told them to stop and had first aid administered to him. He had lost a lot of blood and seemed about to die.

We had set up something like a medical camp in Jogbani, with nurses and compounders. Some medical students from Palpa also worked there. We sent the young man over to the camp, where there were other patients also, and they said it looked as if he might not survive. I ordered a plane by telephone and had the young man evacuated to Patna. He survived with perhaps one hand just a little disabled. I would expect that he is grateful for that assistance.

I thus had all of Uttam Bikram's men protected, and had the governor himself put up next to my headquarters within the jute mill grounds in Jogbani, towards Nepal. I felt it would not be safe to send him elsewhere.

After that victory in Biratnagar, we picked up even more speed, capturing Ilam, Dhankuta, Bhojpur, and so on, until the entire eastern sector was under our control. In some places, there was lack of discipline and control. One cannot deny that some looting did take place. Nevertheless, we were quite successful, moving westwards almost up to Dhulikhel.

An interesting thing happened during the Biratnagar fighting. The Ranas sent a support party to Biratnagar from the capital, a group of about 300 soldiers. They were not allowed to use the Indian railway, so they had to come by the hill trails; it must have taken about 10 or 15 days. It was not possible to travel faster than this, and there was no question of using a plane. We knew we would not last if that rescue party arrived, and we did not know how many they were—it could be 500 or a thousand. We therefore made a plan to prevent them from crossing the Kosi. In mid-river there is a great island which falls under the area of Saneybabu. He made the arrangements and we placed a small platoon there. A narrow channel of the Kosi went through there, and the brigade from Kathmandu would have to cross there.

We kept a lookout on that island because we did not want to be taken by surprise. He was Kuldip Jha, an Indian socialist, and quite a remarkable fellow. One day, he saw a huge cloud of dust approaching across the Kosi, looking like a storm. A little later, it became clear that these were the reserve troops from Kathmandu, and there was no time to inform Biratnagar. We had left Jha with a bicycle and one man to act as messenger, but there was not even time for that. Earlier, we had brought all the ferryboats to this side, in Morang, and had also sunk a few.

On the other side, the soldiers were under the command of a major or captain. Kuldip Jha had a rifle and he fired a shot. By chance, it hit the captain, who was riding a horse. There was firing from the other side, but seeing their captain fall, the soldiers were fooled into believing that the Congress volunteer force had arrived. They all fled. Kuldip was to die, but the effect of that one bullet of his on the captain was that the entire force scattered with abandon. Guns and rifles thrown away by the fleeing soldiers could be found as far away as Bhimnagar in Indian territory.

It took the bicycle messenger a day-and-a-half just to get to Biratnagar. He reported, "The soldiers all fled. Kuldip has died." Before long, Kuldip's body itself arrived on a bullock cart. Our men then forded the Kosi and collected all the guns, pistols and ammunition that had been abandoned. Some were handed over to the police on the Indian side. However, we were able to collect eight sten-guns, and many rifles.

After Biratnagar came into our full control, the intensity of our activities

increased dramatically. Kisunji had been sent to the Saptari sector, where there were not too many militarily significant incidents. Rameshwar Babu and others from Mahottari and Saptari were there with Kisunji. The soldiers from the posts in Saptari surrendered *en masse* before Kisunji, and he made it all the way to Udayapur. This is why even today the people of Saptari and Udayapur respect him greatly. Kisunji then set up camp in Udayapur.

Gopal Prasad Bhattarai was assigned the Birganj region and Balchandra Sharma the Bhairahawa-Thutibari region. The problem in the west was that the leadership did not have a revolutionary face. Time and again, Surya Prasadji came out with statements which actually killed initiative, trying to place blame for the death of fighters on other things even though he was in charge. He did not part with one piece of weaponry, expressing fear that we would do this or that. The sons of the Palpa commander-in-chief were under his influence, and when I say that I mean the influence of certain others. Later, of course, this became clear. The sons later went with Matrika Babu, although Surya Prasad stayed on with me.

Under the leadership of the Palpa commander-in-chief's son, Gopal Shumshere, a platoon had gone to Thori. From the other side, Balchandra Sharma and others asked him to send weapons, but he would not do so. Then the question of leadership suddenly arose—whether it was to be K.I. Singh or the son of the Palpa commander-in-chief. The latter was not prepared to fight, but insisted on keeping the arms. The fighters in the west, including K.I. Singh and others, were extremely angry at the central command. K.I. Singh was not able to capture Bhairahawa. To begin with, he was naturally an arrogant person, but he had a great following among the populace of Marchawar, where he had a record of working at the people's level.

K.I. Singh was talking of revolt and threatened to disobey our central command. I decided to visit the sector even though it was not my area. Matrika Babu would not allow me to go, but I said that I had to go and try to mollify K.I. Singh. I needed to understand the problem, and so one day I arrived in Gorakhpur. In the train, I met a press reporter named Khanna who asked if he could come along when he learnt that I was headed to the front. I warned him, "The bullets can fly there. K.I. Singh may shoot at any one of us." He had indeed said that he would shoot at whoever came. Khanna said, "I will go if you are going." And so I took him along.

When I arrived in Nautanwa, the Palpa commander-in-chief's sons gave me an elaborate welcome. They were in control of everything and tried to dissuade me from proceeding further. "No, they will kill you if you

go. Even we cannot go there," was what they said. I replied, "But that is the very reason why I have come." They would not even provide me with a jeep to get closer to Bhairahawa, outside of which K.I. Singh's troops were gathered. I asked for a guide to go with me but no one came forward. Finally, a Gurung man said, "I will take you." He was from the other side, the faction that was refusing to follow our lead. I took him with me, but first I sent word ahead that I was coming. I placed a Nepali Congress flag on the jeep.

K.I. Singh saw us from afar and recognised me as soon as I got off the jeep. He said, "There comes our leader." Then he ordered everyone to give me a gun salute. The fear had been that they would shoot me, and here they were giving me a salute and a guard of honour. In the east, our soldiers all had clothing, military uniforms, camp cots, and so on. What I saw here in a mango grove was a group of fighters squatting on the ground around a cowdung campfire, without weapons, nothing more than a few rifles between them, and some looted twelve-bore guns. I exclaimed, "What is this? Where are your weapons?"

They were attracting fire like we had in Biratnagar from the governor's compound, but here they had no means of responding. Such was their condition, and I said, "I can see that there has been a great injustice. We had sent you equipment by bullock cart." They replied, "Well, it never arrived. The sons of the Palpa commander-in-chief blocked it along the way." K.I. Singh said, "Why should we agree to follow the central command when we are treated like this?" He had a point there.

Balchandra Sharma was also in the general area, acting independently, and he wasn't playing a very positive role. His people were engaged in looting and vandalism, which K.I. Singh's force was not doing. He may have killed some of the landowners in the Marchawar area, but I do not think the extreme characterisations of K.I. Singh's actions were in fact deserved. The bigwigs of Marchawar were indeed guilty of massive exploitation, and I would have expected the peasants there to participate in some violent acts. I could not say more.

Thuldaju and all the others had tried to stop me from going into K.I. Singh's area, but I had gone in, saying, "How can our own comrades-in-arms attack me?" As I departed, I gave his people my assurance that henceforth the supplies would make their way through. I had asked Subarnaji, who was in charge of our armoury, to please send them weapons. When he said they had already been sent, I asked him to send them again. However, it turned out that the weapons did not go, which is why we had had a revolt on our hands. K.I. Singh was resolute if he was anything, and

he had this one goal of occupying Bhairahawa. This he was not able to do. In the meantime, the agreement was upon us, the so-called Delhi Agreement.

To speak of the far west, there, too, the people had risen, in Dang, Deukhuri and Salyan. Some police posts had been captured under the leadership of Bharat Mani. We were fighting away, but the government forces were standing firm. Our recruits did not comprise a disciplined army. Meanwhile, as we took over territory, we kept adding to the strength of our force. There were some irresponsible people among us as well, and I will relate a few incidents in that context. Our leadership did not have a focused revolutionary perspective. Subarnaji and I were there, but others like Kisunji and Gopalji were involved mainly because of the emotional content of our campaign. Indeed, we were all carried away by emotion.

We had to look to Burma again for weapons and I despatched Devendra to carry out the task. Devendra sent back this message: "They are saying, what kind of revolutionaries are you? You do not have a permanent high command nor a firm long-term plan of battle. You were here just the other day for weapons, and now you say they are all gone. This makes no sense. You must keep a liaison officer here in Rangoon so that we can have regular contact. You must also keep some money here. We can't understand this revolution of yours."

And so there we were fighting ad hoc, with total support of a feeble populace. Meanwhile, there was no sign of activity in Kathmandu, where Ganesh Manji was locked up in jail. Then, finally, we sensed some movement in Kathmandu. Eighty or so Ranas revolted, and there was some disquiet. The British government had sent over Danning and one other person to speak to the Ranas. Some British journalists got through at Birganj and arrived in the Valley, from where they filed despatches indicating the weakness of our insurgency. Bijaya Shumshere said, "The noise of the Indian press is louder than the Congress guns." He was putting out this kind of statements. That was actually true.

Meanwhile, instead of Tribhuvan, they had installed another king. The British and the Indians had a difference of opinion on the matter. The British were all for recognising the person installed by Mohan Shumshere, but Jawaharlalji warned, "If you do that, we will leave the Commonwealth." All this was happening at the diplomatic level. There was a Labour Party government in London that was supporting the Ranas and not us. The Ranas claimed that our action was part of India's plan, concerned as it was with the Chinese arrival in Tibet. Of course, our

revolutionary friends in the field did not understand this backdrop. I did understand, just a little, why all this was so important to India. Later, when I sparred with Jawaharlalji, this point also came up.

Diplomatically, India was fully behind King Tribhuvan, and this also translated into support for our movement. There was quite a crisis surrounding the fact that the British were all set to give recognition to a child-king. This was told to me by Nepal's ambassador to London at the time, Shanker Shumshere, with whom I used to have good conversations. Shanker Shumshere recounted what Ernest Bevin, the foreign secretary, had said to him, "You have nothing to fear. Tell your brother to remain firm, for we will support him." But Mohan Shumshere was not able to stand firm.

At about this time, King Tribhuvan published an appeal, perhaps acting on the advice of India. He said the fighting had to stop and that the Rana group and the Congress must come together to solve the problem under his chairmanship. He never consulted us before issuing that statement, which was, after all, directed at us. I did not reject the suggestion, but I was very angry. Lakhs of copies of that statement were printed without our knowledge and air-dropped by a small plane all over Nepal. That plane flew over Biratnagar too, and when I picked up one of the pamphlets and read it, in anger I ordered my people to fire at the aircraft. As I said at that time, "What right does he have to do this? He has not even given the order to fight, so how can he demand it cease?" That was my perspective.

In any case, good or bad, we were not successful in our attempts to meet the king. Meanwhile, a different party believed that the king was with them. This kind of thing upset me greatly. Perhaps this was an indication of my political immaturity, but this kind of emotionalism used to overtake me, and still does even today.

The matter of holding the proposed conference came up. Thuldaju wanted it and so did the others. There was a difference of opinion between me and the others as to the venue, and some acrimony surfaced. I was extremely unhappy with the developments. There was no way out but to hold a conference. The king was on the other side, as was India, and we did not have much going for us. Mohan Shumshere had secretly surrendered, it turned out. This, too, was relayed to me later by Shanker Shumshere. The British foreign secretary had called him in and said, "I cannot help you now because your elder brother has already surrendered to India." The British had given strong backing to the Rana regime, and had told Shanker Shumshere, "Tell your brother not to panic. He has our backing till the last moment." But Mohan

Shumshere did surrender, perhaps out of fear.

So we had to decide where to hold the conference, and the Indian ambassador, C.P.N. Sinha, ended up playing a decisive role in this matter. Till that point, he had not emerged as a significant player, and I had not had much contact with him, but he was beginning to get involved behind the scenes. C.P.N. Sinha called Thuldaju, Subarnaji and me over for a meeting. We were in Patna at the time, and I do not recall anyone else at that meeting. It was he who gave information about the king, which explains the distance India maintained vis-a-vis us and King Tribhuvan. On the many occasions when I myself made an effort to meet the king, however, his private secretary Daya Ram Mathema would send me away saying that the king was not free, or that he was ill.

So C.P.N. Sinha it was who told us that the king had announced a meeting, and that we should have a conference in a suitable place. I said promptly, "Kathmandu." I came out with it before the others had a chance to speak. Both Subarnaji and Matrika Babu remained silent. Then C.P.N. Sinha said, "How can it happen in Kathmandu? They control Kathmandu, and you have not yet been able to seize Kathmandu. If the king goes, won't he be taken into custody? He has just fled the place with such difficulty."

I said, "But we are talking of an agreement, and a ceasefire has already been ordered. It would make no sense for them to take him into custody."

He replied, "But they could organise an attack and say some miscreant did it."

I said, "Well, they will have to provide a guarantee for the king's safety. They will have to give us protection as well as the king. If not, what is the sense of discussing an agreement?"

Thuldaju interjected at that point, saying, "How can we trust the Ranas? Which court of appeal is there if you get killed, I get killed or if anything like that happens?"

Then C.P.N. Sinha said, "The small Koirala is excitable and energetic, but it is the big Koirala who understands Nepal's politics."

"This is not a question of Nepali politics; it is a matter of discussing how two warring parties will move towards an agreement," I responded.

But in the end, what he said was, "You are brave. You can go to Kathmandu. But the king will not go."

Here he was, speaking on behalf of the king. I said, "In that case, we will meet in Biratnagar. Our headquarters are in Biratnagar."

Once again, he raised a complication: "There is no place to stay in Biratnagar. Where shall we stay there?"

I said, "We will make arrangements. The king too will have a place to stay."

"Where in Biratnagar is there a building appropriate for the king? What arrangement can there be in that place? That is not a good choice."

Thuldaju turned to me and, agreeing with C.P.N. Sinha, said, "How can we do it in Biratnagar? You just blurt out anything that comes into your head."

I said, "Come on, the king goes on hunts and spends months in a camp in the jungle. I cannot understand why he cannot go to Biratnagar to negotiate the agreement."

C.P.N. Sinha raised objections to that as well, and finally it was decided that the venue would be Delhi. I agreed with a heavy heart, and said, "I do not like doing it in Delhi. If you, our president, and Subarnaji say so and if the king himself prefers Delhi, than I have nothing more to say."

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I thus agreed reluctantly to the idea of holding the conference in Delhi. There was nothing to be done about it, so all of us arrived in Delhi. We had just had a party conference in Patna, which was why C.P.N. Sinha had been there—to meet us. He left as soon as the Delhi venue was fixed. Our own conference in Patna was held in the hall of a cooperative society, with all our commanders from the various sectors attending. K.I. Singh did not come, and he sent a representative with the message, "I will not accept the proposed agreement."

I explained the need for negotiations, and some of those gathered were resolutely opposed. If I myself had indicated my opposition, that would have been it and the idea of the Delhi conference would have been rejected. But I felt obliged to make everyone understand the reality of the situation. I explained the king's situation, what kind of diplomatic support there was from India, and where we ourselves stood. I suggested that we should not be afraid of going to the negotiating table. I even expressed some anger towards the naysayers.

We left for Delhi, where elaborate arrangements had been made to house us. I said that I would like to stay at the Western Court, which at that time was very nicely kept. I took two rooms. I do not recall now where the others, including Thuldaju, were put up. The king stayed at Hyderabad House, which was the Indian government's guest-house at the time. We

believed that now it would not be difficult to meet him, and indeed we met the king once as soon as we got there, and it was significant. An Indian officer was there to provide security to the king, and he stayed in the foyer next to the staircase. He saluted me as I arrived, and left to bring Dayaram Bhakta Mathema, who said, "His Majesty is seated over there."

Thus, as directed by Dayaram Bhakta Mathema, I went to the king. I believe that that was the first time I saw King Tribhuvan although I had met two of his sons earlier. I used to meet them out in the bazaar, at the outfitters or elsewhere. I had not met the crown prince, however. The king asked me to sit with him on the couch, and I joined him there. That was something unusual. He asked me how I was, and added some words of praise, saying, "I have heard a lot about you."

Sitting together with the king on one sofa was unusual, that became clear enough from what followed. There were some chairs about, and the king's sons were present. While I was there, Madhav Shumshere arrived. He had been our jailer in Dhankuta. The king called him in, and pointed to a chair and said, "Do sit down." He did not take the chair, and instead sat on the carpet. He bit his tongue and said, "We do not have the right to sit there, in the presence of Your Majesty!" He had seen me sitting there on the sofa. Later, outside, he told me, "We shouldn't do that. We should not sit on the same couch with His Majesty."

In that discussion, I told the king that we had come because we believed we had to work together.

I kept waiting for the round-table conference in which all sides would participate. But it did not happen. Bijaya Shumshere, and I do not know who else, had come to represent Mohan Shumshere. From our side, we had Matrika Babu, Subarna Shumshere, and others who had come to Delhi. But Jawaharlalji only met us separately, while insisting that we had to work together. He repeated the same *raag*, and added, "You all have to come up with the solution." But we never got to sit down with the Ranas. Jawaharlalji also talked to them separately.

I recall an interesting incident. It was 26 January, and we, too, had been invited to the ceremony when the president of India takes the salute and watches the floats go by on Raj Path. Separate seating was reserved for Nepali Congress representatives, and next to it was the section reserved for the Ranas. When the ceremony was over, we and the Ranas headed for our cars at the same time. They had come with their wives. I recognised Bijaya Shumshere, and said, raising my hand, "Hello, Bijaya."

He came over, and we walked ahead together. He said, "When are we supposed to be meeting?" I replied, "I, too, am wondering. We were told

that we had come to meet, to negotiate." Then Bijaya Shumshere introduced me to his wife. I ended up developing a good relationship with Bijaya Shumshere and maintained contact with his wife till much later. Anyway, that is how I greeted him there, and we barely met for a minute or two. Thuldaju had walked ahead and was waiting for me by the car. As I approached, he expressed anger, saying, "Why did you go to speak to them? Why did you go over?"

I said, "You mean it is okay to speak with them across a table, but not here?"

"No, why did you raise your hand first and say, 'Hello, Bijaya'? That was *infra dig*." Thuldaju had learnt that one term, '*infra dig*', which meant lowering one's dignity, and was constantly using it. I said, "I have done nothing which hurts our standing. If we are thinking about negotiating with them and coming to an agreement on the running of a government, why couldn't I talk to him here?"

He said, "We cannot do that until we reach an agreement."

I said, "We have to do that while reaching towards an agreement as well."

That was my argument, but Thuldaju would not agree. He was convinced that I had done something that demeaned and weakened us. There was a distinct difference between his style and mine. I was the one who was opposed to the agreement and who was for continued armed action, but later it was I who had to make our friends come around to consider negotiation. It was I who had to marshal all the support that Thuldaju required, and yet he nit-picked on such little matters and called things "*infra dig*".

We returned from meeting the king. C.P.N. Sinha was staying at a residence next to Hyderabad House, where the dewan of Hyderabad used to stay in earlier times. He was, therefore, in regular touch with the king. He used to call Thuldaju and Subarnaji and maybe Surya Babu over at night and talk with them. I was not included and only found out later. My own meetings were limited to those with Jawaharlal Nehru. Then suddenly, one day, I heard, "It has been decided." Bijaya Shumshere's party had not met with any of us, not with our president, nor with the king. Our own contact with the king was limited to that one informal meeting. There had not been a single official session.

We learnt that the king was to return, that he was to make a royal announcement, that a government would be formed with the two sides, and that the prime minister would be Mohan Shumshere from the Rana camp. I had a problem with that. I debated at length with Jawaharlalji on

the division of portfolios. I demanded strenuously that we should keep defence and home, but expressed scepticism that they would relinquish those important slots. Jawaharlalji argued, "Do not take the Military Department, for the Ranas still have a lot of influence on the military. Believe me, even if you get the military, it will not play such a pivotal role. Besides, you have the police. Make the police as strong as the military is." Thinking it over, I saw the logic in his argument.

It seemed that the Home Ministry would be in my command, and so I said, "I will take the Home Ministry." But it turned out that they meant for me to take Finance or some other portfolio and that Subarnaji would take the Home Ministry. Jawaharlalji, of course, could not say this himself, so he sent C.P.N. Sinha. Sinha came and told me, "The Home Ministry is a very difficult department, one that can only bring disgrace. Give it to Subarnaji; he will manage it. He is a Rana, and he also knows more of the history. You take Finance, for that is the department that controls all." I refused to go along, and he then fell silent.

On the question of inducting the rest of the ministers, I insisted that as long as I was the leader of our group in the cabinet, I would choose my colleagues. Five were supposed to be from our side, so four names had to be added. After discussion within the party, it was agreed that we should have representation from the tarai, hills, and so on. I tried to take Rameshwar Babu from the tarai. He was a peculiar man. Everyone had tried approaching him, and I had sent telegram after telegram, but Rameshwar Prasad Singh did not come. Meanwhile, I was being pressured to induct Bhadrakali Mishra. He was the one who had raised objections during our struggle, accusing us of using violence, and so on. Ram Narayan had also done the same, and had talked to me about it.

If a decision was to be made between Bhadrakali and Ram Narayan, I felt we should go for the latter. Both of them used to come up to me to try to gain my confidence. Bhadrakali had passed his Masters from Patna, or he was still studying at the time, I am not sure. He lived near the residence of Bihar's education minister, Dr Mohammad. They had all been engaged in spreading word that our struggle was misconstrued, and that it should have been a Gandhian movement. Surya Babu's pamphlets also came out during that time. Ganesh Manji remembers these matters better. I keep a benevolent attitude, and tend to forget the injustice done to me by others. Indeed, I tend to forget a lot.

Under a lot of pressure and forced to choose one or the other, I named Bhadrakali Mishra. "Whatever you say," was his response.

Tanka Prasad Acharya, Dilli Raman Regmi and Khadga Man Singh

arrived in Delhi while this selection process was on. Khadga Man wished to inform Jawaharlalji that he was the biggest revolutionary of Nepal, and that he should be named. Jawaharlalji may not even have met them, I never found out. He may have told them that this was a matter between the king and the Nepali Congress, and that they should contact us. Then they did meet me. Chuda Prasad had also come. As is my nature, I agreed to go and meet these people, and I was informed they were staying at the Coronation Hotel, which is towards Old Delhi. I went over.

When we met, Tanka Prasad said, "Take me into your cabinet. I am also a socialist like you, so it will strengthen the socialist movement. Take me in." Now, nothing was certain, neither did I think that a berth in the cabinet was that important. I felt very bad that he was so insistent, for we had regarded him as a great leader. No sooner was he released from jail in Nepal, than he was here in Delhi, demanding, "Take me." I did not meet his demand, and so Tanka Prasad left in a huff. His argument was, "Your hand will be strengthened if I join; the socialists will be in a good position." That may or may not have happened, but I said, "That is not possible now, and neither will our party people agree to your inclusion." That group was extremely unhappy with me and it left after spending a day in Delhi, saying, "We came here to meet you, not wanting to meet anyone else. Things did not work out; that's okay." Perhaps they did meet Jawaharlalji, but they certainly had not come to meet us.

Jawaharlalji raised a point, saying, "You need a member from the west in your cabinet." It turned out that a delegation made up of Surya Prasad, Mahendra Bikram and some others had gone to him, complaining that the cabinet was not being made regionally representative, that it was packed with people from the east. He took Surya Prasad to be from the west. That would have been convenient for Jawaharlalji, for he too wanted Surya Prasad inducted.

I said, "It is not possible to be completely regional because we are not forming the whole government on our own."

Jawaharlalji explained, "There will be less dissatisfaction within the party if you have such representation. Besides, in a democracy, you have to look out for these things." However, it was clear to me that his sole intention was to have Surya Prasad in.

"But who do you suggest I take from the west?" I asked.

The name "Surya Prasad" emerged from his lips. "Surya Prasad is there, and there would be others in your party I am sure."

I responded, "Since when is Surya Prasad from the west? He is an easterner."

Then he said, "What do I know? He came here early this morning with a delegation. He was somewhat dissatisfied, particularly with regard to you. He was saying that the west was neglected during both the revolution and now. Surya Prasad was the leader of that delegation, which is why I raised the matter."

I said, "He hails from the east. His village is next to my own, the name is Fakarbas."

"I did not know this. In which case, what you are doing is correct." What more could Jawaharlalji have said under the circumstances?

A group came over from Dang, including Bharat Mani and Parasu Narayan. They were all boys. Parasu Narayan was perhaps studying for his masters at the time, and Bharat Mani was probably doing his Bachelors. Everyone pointed to Bharat Mani, saying, "He is our leader." I was getting a little annoyed by this persistent demand for western representation, and so I told Jawaharlalji, pointing at Bharat Mani, "Here, we have a representative from the west. That's he."

"That's fine; it is a matter of your discretion," he said. That was how the matter was settled.

Then they began to check Bharat Mani's age. I think you had to be 25 years to be in the cabinet, and he was barely 22 or 23. The newspapers raised the matter, and there were attempts to malign him. On the other hand, he was a somewhat foolish person. I had cautioned him, "Look, be careful and do not talk too much. Read, study. If there is a problem, come to me." His response was to go to Lucknow and buy himself three thousand rupees worth of books. That amounted to a lot back then, and he surrounded himself with books. I had also told him not to talk too much, and he was keeping absolutely silent. But that was hardly a problem. Today, Indira Gandhi is running her government with so many fools, and not one of them can talk. Anyway, at that time there were efforts to remove Bharat Mani. There was also a wave of unrest throughout the country.

When they talk about the Delhi Agreement, this is all there was. We never had a discussion with Mohan Shumshere's delegation about the procedures leading up to the agreement. All the talk was done via the medium of Jawaharlalji, and Jawaharlal Nehru himself did not make any concrete interventions. The king took no part at all although if he had talked to the others, I do not know of it. What is presented as the "Delhi Agreement" is something imaginary. But constantly, whenever I raised a point, the Indian side would say, "This is according to the Delhi Agreement."

In any case, we returned to Nepal with that simple understanding that the king would deliver a royal declaration and that a government would be formed made up of the two forces. The joint understanding was that if one group withdrew, the other would also be automatically out. The selection of ministers had been agreed to orally; nothing had been written down, as far as I can recall. Also, I do not know of any agreement between the two sides discussing matters under the king's supervision. If there was some understanding reached behind closed doors without my knowledge, that I would not know. What is true is that I was the main person there, the leader of my side—and I do not know of any such agreement. But, by and large, it was agreed that the king would make an announcement upon return, a government would be formed, and its membership announced.

From Delhi we went to Patna, from where we took two planes to Kathmandu, landing half an hour before the king's plane landed at the Gauchar Airport. Kathmandu had probably never seen the kind of crowd that had gathered there. We waited for the king's plane to arrive. Mohan Shumshere and all the other Ranas were present. Mohan Shumshere and I eyed each other there. The king arrived, and an unusual wave of enthusiasm overwhelmed the crowd. He went off to his darbar.

Meanwhile, our organisational situation could be seen clearly from the fact that when we disembarked in Kathmandu, we did not have places to stay. I did not have a residence here; indeed, none of us did, and so as the king left the aerodrome, we had to decide where to go. I said I would stay with Govinda Koirala, a relation. Sushila and others had all come. For the first two or three days, however, we all squeezed into a house in Kamal Pokhari that belonged to Subarnaji's sister's husband, the father of Thirbam Malla.

There was now the matter of the royal proclamation. The draft had been prepared initially in Delhi, and we, too, had had an opportunity to look at it. It was in English and now it had to be translated into Nepali. Gunjaman was our cabinet secretary. We had a discussion on usage, for we had to translate the term 'democracy' in the draft. I had meant to say '*loktantra*', but I forgot '*lok*' and said '*ganatantra*' instead. Everyone agreed to that, and that was how in that proclamation the translation of 'democracy' reads as '*ganatantra*'. There, the word does not mean 'republic'. I also recall that there is one proviso which states in case of disagreement in the texts, the English draft shall prevail.

There was another crisis on our hands when it came time for us to go to the royal palace to be sworn into the council of ministers. All the very important people were already gathered there in the big hall, diplomatic representatives, ambassadors—at that time there were the British and the Indian ambassadors—and others. The matter of protocol came up. The prime minister, of course, came first, and then it should have been me. The understanding had been that I would be the second person in the cabinet, as leader of the second group represented. The third person in the hierarchy would be the prime minister's, then ours, and so on.

For me, this matter of protocol was not insignificant. Since both constituents in the cabinet were supposed to be equal, I could not agree that the first and second positions should go to one side. Babar Shumshere was commander-in-chief, and he felt that as a former minister he was eligible for second ranking. Back then, there was the position of 'Minister and Commander-in-Chief'. We had an argument and it seemed that the situation might take a serious and dangerous turn.

I got up and left the hall, entering the adjoining room. This was the same room in the palace that I was to use as my bedroom lobby when I went to stay there after the attacks in April. The king followed me into that chamber. Prime Minister Mohan Shumshere was right there, and his bodyguards could be seen entering *en masse*, sten guns in hand. I said, "He cannot do this. The prime minister is trying to intimidate me. No, I will not agree. We had an agreement, and I will not change my position." The soldiers received a signal and marched to the prime minister's side. Everyone started placating me, although the Indian ambassador could not do anything because that would have looked inappropriate in front of everybody. Thuldaju came over to talk to me.

Then it was Babar Shumshere's turn to approach me. He held my hand and said, "Bishweshwar Babu, I just need to maintain my honour. I will attend one meeting of the cabinet and then be gone. I will be leaving for Bombay, and after that, you will face no problems. Please do this much for me." He held my hand as he spoke. I relented, "Okay, fine." When I said that, the hiatus of about a half-hour or hour was over. Everyone was waiting as the swearing-in had been timed for an auspicious moment, which had been another cause for worry there.

The oath-taking completed, we held the first meeting of the council at Singha Darbar. There was a small chamber there, known as the *Kaath ko Baithak*. It was always surrounded by the military, and inside was a scene of constant tension. I never got too agitated, but Ganesh Manji was always

in a fury, and added to that, he had a loud voice. I remember one event, before our first cabinet meeting had even taken place. The prime minister had hosted a party in the large hall of Singha Darbar, and we were all there. I introduced Ganesh Manji to Mohan Shumshere, who told Ganesh Manji, "You know, I saved your life." Ganesh Manji's immediate response was, "Sorry, it was not you but our revolution that saved me." Such pointed comments were to continue in our cabinet meetings. On our side, we were extremely conscious that this power had come to us through revolution, and that was readily expressed. Such were the dynamics within the council of ministers: work was progressing, but there was always tension in the air.

There was a powerful force actively working to make that particular political experiment fail. This I understood only later. I was trying hard to make the experiment a success. Jawaharlalji, too, had said, "If you make this work, you will gain respect. You will not be able to do too much right now, but then you can blame them for the lack of progress. You are representatives of the people. You can always say, 'What could we do, we are forced to cohabit with reactionaries.' In this way, you can apply pressure." That was good advice from Jawaharlalji, and I appreciated it. I was not one of those who wanted that political experiment to fail. After the elections, of course, another phase would begin, but before that I was keen to make this system endure, and work. In his announcement the king had referred to "a constituent assembly after the election", and I was focused on that. I was home minister, and that was where my mind was concentrated.

My first problem as home minister was something as simple as finding a place to stay, for the home minister had no home in Kathmandu. Houses were not available for rent. There was a government guest-house in Tripureswar; it is still there, adjacent to the Handicraft Department office. I took over the bigger one, as home minister. Next, was the problem of where to put my office, for there had been no Ministry of Home Affairs before this. Upstairs in my new residence, there was a bedroom, a drawing room and a smaller room. Downstairs was the same, as well as a kitchen. I converted the two downstairs rooms into the office.

With an office found, I now needed a home secretary, and I did not have a clue whom to get. I asked Mohan Shumshere, "Tell me, who was the secretary in your Home Department?" He replied, "We never had a Home Department as such. There was what was called a Muluki Adda, which came under the commander-in-chief. You ask him; he may be able to help." Babar Shumshere was the commander-in-chief, and I asked him

who his secretary was. "We never had a secretary," he replied. "The petitions would come up, and I would pass my orders there and then. There was no office or position like that." I said, "You could at least suggest a name."

He named a person of sardar rank, who happened to be the first person in Nepal to have earned a Masters in Philosophy. He was a good man, but with no political concept whatsoever, a man who had risen up the ranks to become sardar. Babar Shumshere suggested his name, and I said, "Fine, I will take him." Not knowing him, I called him in and said, "You will now be my secretary." That was how he joined me.

The problem was that my secretary and others like him had no experience of working with files. Whenever something came up, I had to instruct him, "First make a decision yourself, and then send it on to me for approval." That he never did, out of fear or whatever. The man would keep sending everything to me for decisions. I did not have a telephone so I asked for a connection. One telephone arrived, with wires hanging all over the place. The entire office was disorganised, and no one knew what to do, nor whose authority extended up to where. The home secretary was quite unacquainted with all this, and the same was the case with my private secretary.

We brought two or three experts from India to help with setting up the Secretariat. Whether that was right or wrong, history will judge, but our intention was to modernise the administration a bit. We could hardly have continued running the government the way the Ranas did. One of the experts attached to me was the home secretary of UP, a man named Govinda Narayan. He was very capable, but not appropriate for us. There was another, K. Narayan, who was assigned to the Finance Department and worked with Subarnaji. He was quite valuable, for we had to find a way of handling financial matters. To give an example of the kind of things we faced because of a non-existent administration: I was signing petrol ration cards, hundreds of them.

The home administration and the police came under my jurisdiction. We had our own people, but they tended to be irresponsible, with little regard for administrative or legal principles. Take the example of Birganj, where Tej Bahadur's group was quite out of control. They had weapons they would not surrender. They brandished their weapons, and became violent when we asked them to hand them over. They chased away whoever we sent there as governor. Since I was not finding my home secretary useful, I sent him off to Birganj to fill that position, but in the end I had to remove him from there as well and send him to the Public Service

Commission. He was a good man, but inappropriate for the changing situation.

I then assigned Tilak Shumshere to Birganj. Before departing, he asked me for instructions, and I said, "You are now governor. Go down there and bring about a semblance of administration and rule of law. You do not have to ask my permission for trivial matters." Till much later, Tilak Shumshere used to recall how I had despatched him to Birganj with so much authority in his hands. He said, "You trusted me so much, even as a Rana." So, he went down to Birganj and asked the rebels to surrender their arms. He gave them a deadline of three days, saying that he would have to seize the weapons thereafter. However, when they only handed over their damaged arms, he arrested them and sent them up to Kathmandu. They were our associates, and yet he did that.

Meanwhile, Bhairab Prasad Acharya was fomenting trouble in the east. During the revolution, we had placed military governors in several places. Now he started saying that he was the military governor, that he was independent and would not kowtow to the centre. Interestingly, and somehow, Matrika Babu would find ways to instigate people like him. Bhairab Prasad Acharya had appointed people as "foreign minister," "commander-in-chief," and so on. Dharma Prasad Dhakal and some others were also part of this. They plundered wealth over there, and sent out seven lakh rupees sealed in a gunny sack. While I insisted on taking action against such people, Thuldaju would try to give them protection.

We also had a problem in Bhojpur, where they would not let any governor we sent stick it out. We sent one general and he fled at night, jumping from a window. I sent Dev Shumshere's son, a good, upright man, and he was locked up in an attic. He sent us a message, "I am dying here." He was a rather hapless person.

Meanwhile, Kathmandu was in a state of chaos. The law and order situation had become grave and unstable. The Ranas were out to prove me a failure. Ganesh Manji would have a delegation harassing him, and he would come to me to complain. For example, once a group demanded that we declare Khadga Man "Father of the Nation" because he had spent time in jail, and that we should put up ceremonial gates in his honour. After I had mollified them and sent them along, Ganesh Manji would turn to me and say, "You sure handled them well."

India, meanwhile, was engaging in its own machinations. The Indian ambassador believed that he was even greater than the king. I do not know what the king discussed with him, nor what the prime minister

discussed with him. He would call everyone to his residence and get his job done.

We did not have a secretariat, which might sound astonishing. Our offices were in each of our houses. The two rooms below where I lived was my secretariat, and that is where my secretaries worked. Mohan Shumshere, meanwhile, remained in Singha Darbar.

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The Ranas then came out with a group called Gorkha Dal. I was the home minister, but without experience in these matters. The reports they generated gave the impression that we would be finished off tomorrow, if not today. But they all turned out to be false. A police report would come in, stating that 'Nati Jarnel' Bharat Shumshere's limousine was seen at night at a certain place. Another report would state that there were some others gathered there. A third report would state that guns and pistols were also being assembled. Three reports would come to me through three different channels. That was the real situation on the ground.

As home minister, I was being pressured by those who said, "Look at all that is happening, and here you are sitting with your hands tied." But I knew that the situation was being exaggerated. What was also true was that we had no weapons, absolutely none. We had the police, from the Raksha Dal, about six thousand in all. When they were headed towards Kathmandu, I halted their march in Dhulikhel, sending Toran Shumshere over to placate them. If I had allowed them to enter Kathmandu, there would have been looting and violence, for they were an angry band. The Rais and Limbus were reliable, but the majority was not. The leadership was very sober, but the group as a whole was unhappy.

I inducted them into the armed constabulary, and they felt that that in itself was demeaning. Even if I had wanted to provide them with weapons, we did not have them. I placed the matter before the cabinet, saying that we needed a thousand guns. With a lot of convincing the prime minister, who also held the defence portfolio, agreed to allow access to the armoury. So, we got rifles, but without ammunition. After I raised a clamour, finally, ten bullets were issued per rifle, a total of 10,000. Next, we realised that the guns had no striking pins, and again we had to expend a lot of energy in getting a thousand striking pins.

I made Toran Shumshere the inspector general of police. One day, I asked him, "Can you arrest Bharat Shumshere?" My thought was that if

we did this, the other side would lose heart. There was a general impression that, as a ranking 'rotwala' Rana, Bharat Shumshere was untouchable. For this very reason, it was important to take him into custody. At first, Toran Shumshere was afraid, but then he said, "If you give me the order, I will go to arrest him." There was a feeling that the military might revolt, as we did not have good relations with them. There were also efforts underway, from both our side and theirs, to sour the relationship. It is dangerous for any administration when the soldiers are unhappy. Against this backdrop, I gave Toran Shumshere the order, "Go ahead; arrest Bharat Shumshere."

In the morning, Toran Shumshere went over and first argued with Bharat Shumshere about surrendering and then arrested him. The commander-in-chief was Babar Shumshere, who had attended one meeting of the cabinet and immediately left for Bombay. Fortunately, nothing untoward took place that day. Bharat Shumshere surrendered, even though for a while there was every possibility that he might not. They came back to ask me where to keep him and I replied, "Take him to the jail, but treat him well."

It was early in the morning, and the news spread that Bharat Shumshere had been arrested. A large mob of Gorkha Dal supporters emerged and moved towards the jail to attack. The jail was close to where I was staying, and it was the month of April. They broke into the jail and a crowd of about six or seven thousand carried him around town, shouting slogans against the Congress, brandishing khukuris, and demanding the blood of this person or that. In the mob were the palace guards of Babar Shumshere. One of them was killed. Later, I even had his khukuri with me. The palace guards had khukuris, but not rifles.

In front of my gate was the field where the stadium would be built later. Bharat Shumshere told me subsequently, "When they took me from the jail, I thought we were going towards a rally. However, when I sensed the mood of the crowd, and saw that it was bent on attacking you, I extricated myself and ran towards Tudikhel." Meanwhile, as the mob came close, I directed the gates to be closed, but they were easily torn down. The lone policeman on duty had his rifle snatched. I have a nephew; he was holding a sten-gun. He was attacked with stones and fell unconscious. His gun was also picked up by the mob.

Then they entered my office and beat up the staff. One man, Udaya Prasad, was attacked and left unconscious, his leg broken. They made a bonfire outside of all the paperwork they could find and also set the car on fire. Prakash had a small toy car, and he was crying from above, "They

burnt it too!" He was perhaps three or four. Ganesh Manji was with us upstairs, and perhaps Kisunji too, and Rameshwar. I had a guest there at the time, a member of India's parliament. He had gone out but the mob got hold of his holdall, tore it apart, and burnt it.

Only my bedroom remained for them to enter. My mother was with me. Ganesh Manji saw me unruffled, and he praises my bearing then even to this day. I told them, "You all keep calm." I had a revolver with a magazine of six or seven bullets. A gang of about two or three hundred streamed up the stairs and had reached the landing when I emerged from the room and scolded them, "What kind of indiscipline is this? Go! If you have to revolt, do it in a meeting. How dare you invade someone's home?"

When I said this, they turned around and sheepishly headed down the steep stairs. I was surprised. However, it seemed that someone was instigating them from below, and they all seemed to have had something to drink. They turned around and once again headed back up the stairs. A couple of them held out naked khukuris. There was a stocky man who, it turned out, was a palace guard. When I emerged again to confront them, they came tearing towards me, intent on doing harm. I had the pistol in my hand, and pulled the trigger four or five times. The palace guard got hit in the heart, and his body collapsed on the threshold, half inside my bedroom, half outside. The khukuri skidded on the rug. It had a 'Ba' inscribed on it, and the handle was made of ivory. It was a long knife with an ivory handle, of Babar Shumshere's palace guard.

One of the attackers was hit in the ear and started wailing. Another was also hit somewhere else. In all, three were wounded, and the rest fled. During dangerous moments like this, Ganesh Manji would slip Mother into the bathroom, and I would tell him, "What good does it do to put her in the bathroom? They will go in there as well. If we are to die, we must do so fighting." He used to recall later on, "What calm, what bravery you showed. I used to think that there could be no one braver than me, but I was surprised to see you in action."

Immediately after the incident, I got a call from the prime minister's office. It was Bijaya Shumshere on the line. He said, "My father asked me to give you a call. It seems you have been attacked by a mob. Father asks if he should send the Bijuli Garat force." I replied, "You need not do anything. I know who did this and he will pay dearly for it. The demon is also the shaman, in this case. I am fully capable of protecting myself, and the prime minister does not have to come to my aid. I know who has done this, and he will have to pay through his nose."

Bijaya Shumshere replied, "Don't get angry; I will send the force anyway." He then sent someone whose name was something-or-other 'Jung', someone liked by Mohan Shumshere. This man came and took in what had happened. He was an important man, a good person, and I have no complaint regarding him. But he was Mohan Shumshere's man. Such an incredible incident had taken place; I had faced such a dastardly attack, and to phone me like that! After a while, we looked down from the windows and saw that a group had entered the premises and had surrounded the house. They carried their guns at the ready. Who were these people—the military?

Kaiser Shumshere was at that time parading the troops in Tudikhel. What Kaiser had to say was this: "I wanted to see if I could maintain control. I gathered everyone at the *khari* tree area, and had them all stand in a square facing me, with their backs to the city. That is how I held them together, and managed to keep control. If not, who knows what would have happened, and where you all would be!" He may have been right.

Meanwhile, after separating from the mob, Bharat Shumshere found himself a four-horse carriage and got into it. Who knows where he found the carriage, perhaps he had come all the way in Babar Shumshere's carriage. The mob once again grabbed him, and he escaped once again and got into a car. Later, as he explained to me, "I had a decision to make. I could have taken over, and the troops would have gone with me. But first I would have had to kill you. I thought for a few minutes as to what I should do." He concluded that if he took that course of action, there would be an even greater crisis. He told me, "It would have had to be either you or me, in the kind of situation that had developed. The city crowd was surrounding me, throwing stones at me, cursing me using all kinds of language. Under the circumstances, I felt like appealing to the troops. But had I done that, I would have had to do away with you."

Dirgha Raj worked as my secretary. At that time, he had gone somewhere outside, and they saw him. "This is Koirala!" the Gorkha Dal people shouted, grabbing him and hurting him with khukuri blows. They brought him walking, and Kaiser Shumshere was there to see it. That is how fluid the situation was outside, and the troops may indeed have revolted. If that had happened, there would have been great bloodshed, and it was not clear who would take whose side. The army was unhappy, suffering as it was from the pangs of defeat, and it would have wanted to give vent to its frustration. We, too, had weapons, so there could have been fighting on the streets. A thousand rifles would have sufficed for that.

The questioned remained, who were those fifty or a hundred armed men who had surrounded our house? Ganesh Manji did not allow me to open the window, but looking through the shutters, I noticed that they were not well dressed, nor in khaki, and had only rifles with them. They were aiming upwards. Then I recognised their commander and realised that these were our own—the Raksha Dal, which had heard that the Gorkha Dal had already killed us and were occupying the building.

After I had arrested Bharat Shumshere and before that whole episode played itself out, I had received a telephone call from the prime minister, who had said, "Come over, quickly."

I went over, and he demanded, "Why did you arrest Bharat?"

I said, "I received many reports on him, that is why."

"But we have the rule in the cabinet that anyone's arrest under the security laws must first be cleared by it."

I replied, "The home minister is given a period of three days. I will place the matter before the cabinet before the time is up."

He asked, "Can you tell me what it was he did?"

"This organisation is involved in illegal activities, and Bharat Shumshere is its secretary. We do not yet know who is the president."

With anger in his voice, Mohan Shumshere said vehemently, "Do you want to know who it is? I am the president!"

"If you are president of an illegal organisation, the home minister can order your arrest."

We had quite a quarrel that day, there in Singha Darbar. The military officers were all watching, and that is the level to which we used to descend.

"Did you call me just to say this?" I demanded angrily and spun around to go. Bijaya Shumshere came to my side and said in a low voice, "He is advanced in age. Please don't let what he says affect you."

It was after I returned from there that that whole great incident with the mob took place. Later, Toran Shumshere came asking our people below if they were all right. The commander replied, "We are all okay, but there is not a sign of activity upstairs." After hearing this exchange, we finally opened our windows and doors. He shouted up at us, "Are you all safe?"

"We're safe," we replied.

Then Yog Bikram arrived from the royal palace, saying, "His Majesty sent me to ask how you all are doing." He checked everything and left, and a little later a call came from the king, "It seems that it is unsafe for

you there. Come over to my place." I had a problem finding another place immediately, and so I went to Narayanhiti Palace to be a guest of the king. Mother was also with us, and we all moved into an entire wing that had been emptied for us.

Rarely have I seen the level of comfort I witnessed there in the royal palace. Water for bathing, three or four women to look after us, and lavish arrangements for our meals. The *pirka* on which we sat to eat were covered with white cloth, and they served us with white gloves on. They were constantly asking how I was doing and if everything was all right. The king's daughters came to meet Mother, and me also, asking if we were being taken care of well. The king himself did not visit much, but the daughters used to come every day. Mother had started to feel awkward, but I hardly had the time to bother because there was so much to do. I stayed there about three weeks, while my mother went over to Subamaji's. The king kept me very well, giving me all the respect and facilities that one would give a guest.

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The day of that incident, I requested King Tribhuvan, "We must hold a cabinet meeting, here in the royal palace, and today. We have to discuss the incident and come to a conclusion. In such a volatile situation, the government cannot run with the prime minister and a minister maintaining such antagonistic attitudes." The king agreed and called Mohan Shumshere, who replied, "It is already late. Can't we do it tomorrow? What is the hurry?"

The king replied, "Okay, you can come tomorrow."

The next morning, we met in extraordinary emergency session under the king's chairmanship. The prime minister arrived. We had already been given our snacks, but when Mohan Shumshere was offered his plate, he said, "I will not eat. I have not done my *puja*." He did not even drink water, saying he could only do it after the morning ritual. We then had the meeting, where I said that whether or not the prime minister was actually involved in the incident of the day before, the public generally believed that it had been the Ranas' doing and that the prime minister had had a hand in it. For that reason, the prime minister should resign.

Mohan Shumshere scowled, but did not speak. For one thing, he had not bathed, nor eaten. The king then asked everyone. The defence minister was not present, and someone else was looking after his portfolio.

Everyone supported my proposal, including Nripajang Rana, who was from the other side. He said, "This joint ministry of the Ranas and the Congress is not working, Your Majesty." Chuda Raj Shumshere also said that the government would not work. Thus, everyone supported my line. There was nothing left for Mohan Shumshere to say.

The resignation note of the prime minister now began to be drafted. Govinda Narayan had been shifted to the royal palace as the king's private secretary. I had brought him over to provide me with advice, and he had later been shifted to the royal palace. He was very capable, and prepared the draft resignation letter in no time. It was in English, and he placed it before us on the table.

At that very moment, C.P.N. Sinha called from Allahabad. He had heard of the incident while in Delhi, and was rushing to get to Nepal but had only got as far as Allahabad. He called the Indian embassy with the message, "I will get to Kathmandu some time today. The Delhi Agreement was concluded with our help, so for that reason we also should be informed before you make any important decision." The first secretary in the embassy, a Bengali, came and asked to meet the king urgently. He relayed the message to the king, who asked me what to do. I said, "We should decide on this. He can come later."

The king said, "No, he has already made his appeal, and he will be here today by special plane. Let us wait." I relented. This meant that there were now a couple of hours free, and the prime minister had said that he would go home. I, too, thought that I would go to my room, take a bath and have something to eat. I was afraid that the prime minister might not return, but he assured the king that he would be back after his bath and puja.

When I returned, the prime minister was not there. He generally came with a large retinue, including his Bijuli Garat. We discussed the need to go and get him. Ganesh Manji was insistent, and we decided that Mohan Shumshere should not be allowed to enter Singha Darbar, that he should be brought back before he did that. We estimated that he must have got as far as the Lumadi temple. We looked around to see who would go fetch the prime minister, and Nara Shumshere spoke up, "If His Majesty orders, I will go." And so Nara Shumshere went off on his motorbike and overtook the prime minister's limousine at the Lumadi temple and forced it to stop. He said the king had asked Mohan Shumshere to be present, and brought him back to the royal palace. Mohan Shumshere was puzzled. He had just left the meeting; what could it be that required his presence back so soon?

C.P.N. Sinha arrived on 8 June. He first spoke to the king, then with Mohan Shumshere, then with me. He requested me, "Do not humiliate him. He will resign within two or three weeks. It will take that much time to clean up Laxmi Niwas for him to move into. He will keep a modest bodyguard as long as he holds the office, and afterwards even that will be taken away. Do not insist on a resignation now." I found myself agreeing with his argument. I do not know if this was the 'revolutionary' way, but even today I feel that that was the 'democratic' way. Sometimes, thinking about myself, I feel—and I will point out the events as I go along—that I was perhaps more democratic minded than revolutionary. There were a few incidents from that period which illustrate this.

In any case, I told C.P.N. Sinha, "Okay, we will do as you suggest." Thus, the prime minister did not have to hand in his resignation. "Can he go now?" I was asked, and I signified my assent. The agreement was that he would resign within a few weeks and leave Singha Darbar. For the moment, he would keep a small guard for himself. As soon as he left, I made a strong case for removing the troops as well as the Bijuli Garat from Singha Darbar that very day. That was an extremely important decision, and to some extent I am responsible for what happened next. Oh, my ignorance!

Because we had no hold over the military, we had decided had that we would have a deputy commander-in-chief. When it came to choosing someone, I suggested Kiran Shumshere, and we created the post of deputy chief for him. We told him, "Go to Singha Darbar and move the troops out of there." But the question remained of where to house these soldiers. Other than Singha Darbar, only Narayanhiti Darbar, the royal palace, had the kind of barracks that could hold them, and these were presently empty.

This Singha Darbar group was a crack force that stayed in one place, unlike the other soldiers, who were scattered in rooming houses across the city and would sometimes assemble for parades. We needed to find a place for this force to stay immediately, and someone suggested housing it at the Narayanhiti Royal Palace. I did not see a problem with the suggestion and approved the idea. I myself was then staying there at the royal palace.

We told the deputy commander-in-chief, "Go to Singha Darbar and bring the troops over." After taking that decision, we parted. I was staying at the Narayanhiti Palace, and went upstairs to my room. The others went to their respective homes.

Soon, Kiran Shumshere had brought the entire battalion marching

over. The next morning, without my knowledge and informing no one else, the king took the salute of those troops. It was as if the king were telling them, henceforth show me the loyalty you have shown Mohan Shumshere. Looking out of my window, I saw the king receiving the salute. I was there as a guest, and at the very least should have been informed, but he did not see it fit to do that.

From that day onwards, the king had the upper hand, and democracy lost a notch. We would have retained room for manoeuvre if the force had stayed back at Singha Darbar. From the moment that the battalion came into his hands, the king's attitude changed. From that day, the king became powerful. When I say that the king's bearing changed, I do not mean that he began to create obstacles. He was an easy-going person and he did not intervene, but he knew where his interests lay. He had those two or three advisers.

I have another story relating to Mohan Shumshere. That day, the evening of that attack on me, I became the most powerful person in Nepal. All I lacked was the military. And so, from that day on, India tried to destroy me. To begin with, my relations with India were not very good, and from that day on, India began to help Mohan Shumshere. I was insisting that Mohan Shumshere must go, but India began to buttress his position. Mohan Shumshere was issued an invitation by Jawaharlalji, I believe this was some time in June. As soon as the invitation arrived, the matter of resignation was pushed back. I had also been invited. Also, they started to incite the king.

I do not remember the exact chronology of events, but I had to go on an official tour of the hills. In several places, our people had retained their weapons and were refusing to submit to authority. Those in Ilam and Jhapa had got together to proclaim an independent state, with Chemjong as 'commander-in-chief'. He had soldiers under him. I had sent Yakthumba, a military man, to be governor, but even he was finding it difficult to manage. No one was backing down. So I arrived there with a few others.

My adviser was Sri Nagesh, a very able man, a former commissioner in Jullundhur, whose brother later became commander-in-chief of the Indian Military. Whereas the other advisers such as Govinda Narayan and others from UP, tended to be arrayed against me, Sri Nagesh provided me with strong backing. Time and time again, he would tell me, "They are conspiring against you in Delhi. Why don't you go there to resolve it. There are such and such individuals opposing you."

I took Sri Nagesh with me on my tour of the east. I met Chemjong and

told him, "You must come with me to Kathmandu. I will arrange a senior post for you. Someone else will take your place here." They were ready to shoot, and I asked everyone to lay down arms. I called in the cabinet that they had formed, with Bhairab Prasad Acharya as 'prime minister'. I had insisted that Bhairab should go to jail, but Thuldaju objected and there the matter had remained. I confronted them and said, "You should all resign; otherwise, I will have you all arrested." They were all there, seated, at the governor's house where I had called them together. All of them did resign, and Chemjong came to Kathmandu, which helped diffuse the situation.

Thereafter, I proceeded to Dhankuta, where the governor was kept locked up in an attic by 'our' people. He was Dev Shumshere's son, a very good man, who I had sent over to take up that post. There, too, I gave an ultimatum to the rebels, saying, "You have no right to do this and upset the work of the central government." I talked to them and solved the problem there in Dhankuta as well.

The next stop was Bhojpur. Before reaching it, there is a place called Shyamshila, from where you descend to the river and tackle the final climb. It was a bit chilly at Shyamshila, where there was a kind of fog. I suggested that we have tea. Bhu Dev, Narottam and some others arrived on horses, and said, "Koiralaji, you have come to the Madhya-Kirat region. Here they communicate with swords. The people here do not talk, they fight." I replied, "I will use whatever language they speak here. But why should I waste my time talking to you?" They were demanding their own state, and that movement is still continuing. I repeated what I had said, "I will speak whatever language they understand here."

I looked across, and saw that there was a crowd of eight or ten thousand on the other side. There was nothing to do but to proceed. I was on horseback, but dismounted because of the downward slope. The river was crossed in a dugout, and I could see that the crowd on the other bank was agitated as we went over to meet it. The Bahuns and the Chhetris were all scared and hiding. People under the control of Bhu Dev and Thulung insisted that they had the authority and right to run their own state. When a regime collapses, these things do happen, elsewhere as well. As I got there, I asked Sri Nagesh, "What's your advice?" He replied, "This is a political rather than an administrative problem. It is your decision."

He was right. Indeed, Jawaharlalji had said of him, "We are sending you a very good officer who has pacified revolts and managed all kinds of extremely tense situations." Sri Nagesh said, "I cannot give you advice on

a situation such as this. You are a politician and this situation requires a political resolution." We moved ahead, while around us there was much sloganeering for self-government. Things were completely disorganised, and there were also some slogans in our support. A few were demanding that we respond to the questions being put forth, to which I replied, "This is not the place to give answers. This is not how a home minister does things, standing here. I will go to my lodgings and meet those who come with an appointment. I have come a long distance in order to meet you all, but I will not be coerced into talking to you here in the middle of the road. Please move aside."

I called for a horse and mounted, and space opened up for me to proceed. Quite a few cheered me, and I was taken to a place near the governor's. Dr Tribeni had also come with me, together with Basudev Sharma, my sister-in-law's husband, who was my private secretary. It proved to be quite a challenge to bring the situation under control there. I had only 11 people for my security, and we were confronted by that agitated mass of people. And so I stayed there a few days, and met people individually and in groups. I decided that we needed a Rai to take charge, someone who was also acceptable to the Bahuns and the Chhetris. Thulung's group was apparently unacceptable as they had engaged in violence and looting. In Dhankuta, too, and all the way up from Mulghat, we had met Bahuns and Chhetris who said that they had been looted by Limbus.

There was no doubt that there had been looting, and in fact that was when those who fled from Panchthar and Aathrai settled down in Biratnagar and Jhapa. As I have already noted, a general I sent over to serve as governor had had to flee by jumping from a window. I told my associates that I needed a Rai. I held discussions with the Bahuns and the Chhetris and also consulted Dharma Bahadur Rai and some of the Limbu leaders there, in an effort to bring communal rapprochement. No one was willing to go there and take up the challenge of governorship, however. I had wanted to assign Dhyhan Bahadur Rai. Then I turned to Basudev Sharma and asked him, "Do you want to be governor?" He had no idea of the immensity of the task, and said, "Okay." I saw that this also happens: lack of knowledge gives men the courage required.

On the day I was to return, I told those gathered, "I am leaving behind as governor my own private secretary, my most trusted lieutenant. He is a very capable barrister, Nepal's only barrister. I am doing this so that your district will benefit, and he will need your full cooperation." It was clear that they had wanted as governor someone like Thulung, but no one raised the matter. There was some clapping.

I left Basudev Sharma there and went on my way. He had the habit of walking around with a baton. If he saw any Rai or Limbu walking around drunk, he would beat up the man, shouting, "How dare you walk around at night drunk?" Everyone was scared that they had got a strong and harsh governor. They were all subdued, and he stayed on and brought the situation in Bhojpur under control. He did not have to flee. Later, I myself was brought down, and the entire situation changed.

This was all about the East. I brought peace to all of the East, which had been quite troubled.

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Over here in Kathmandu, there were problems with Mohan Shumshere and the king. And a difficulty also arose within the party. Thuldaju did all that an enemy could have done. He would constantly criticise me, saying, "This home minister is incapable. He cannot maintain law and administration." With the situation as critical as it was, he was raising the question of law and administration. We had set him up in the party like a dictator. Kisunji was the party secretary. I was only home minister. All the dissatisfied elements were with Thuldaju.

Thuldaju had a complex. Once I became home minister I had certain privileges, such as flag, bodyguard, and a house and car assigned by the government. He said that his ranking should be equal to that of home minister, and so he needed a car. Those days, you did not find so many taxis here. He searched for the biggest taxi around, saying that a small taxi would be demeaning to the office of party president. With such a mindset, he could obviously be provoked by Surya Prasad, Mahendra Bikram, Kedar Man Byathit and others.

We had so many challenges that we should have been facing united. There was the challenge of the feudal classes represented by the Ranas; the king was trying to expand his own reach, which had to be stopped; meanwhile, India was trying to get involved, which too had to be halted. Most immediately, there was the breakdown of law and order. In the meantime, the public sought some progress, for this was why we had conducted the revolution. The tiller must hold the land he works on. I did not get the full support required to get this done. The only people who backed me fully were Subarnaji and Ganesh Manji. But Ganesh Manji's support was of the ignorant and emotional kind. Real and effective support I did not get from the party.

The attacks on me continued. The council of ministers was reshuffled in order to bring in Surya Prasad, and Bharat Mani had to go to make space for him. I had agreed to this because of all the problems of the party that were weighing down on me. On the other side, Babar Shumshere had resigned and Singha Shumshere, who had already served as ambassador to India, came in. Thus, two people came into the cabinet from two directions, but the workings did not change.

After the attack on me by Bharat Shumshere but before the cabinet reshuffle, Babar Shumshere arrived from Bombay and challenged me, "Why am I to go? I was not even here. Why should I be punished?" He called me to his place and wept. The two of us were seated on the couch, and he cried clutching me at the knees. That was the first time I had visited his residence. "Why me? What have I done? I was not even here, and I have created no obstacles for you. This is unfair, you should not let it happen." I said, "I do understand that there has been injustice, but my hands are tied. It is the party's decision." He said, "I am appealing to you, to your good judgement and your sense of decency."

It was the same story with Mohan Shumshere, who had already moved house to Laxmi Niwas. One day, he took me to his garden and said, eyes wet with tears, "What sin have I committed that I had to act against my innocent brother? He thinks that I removed him as a sacrificial lamb. He does not understand, and blames me. You have to understand the situation. I am from an aristocratic family, my father was Chandra Shumshere, Nepal's most powerful prime minister. I was his courtier, and never had to serve in any other role. Even when others became prime ministers, I remained second man. I was the second in rank when Chandra Shumshere was prime minister, and I remained in that position under others as well. For that reason, I do not understand the people, nor what to make of this or that. But I do have experience in running a state. I know that the reports you receive can be false, that fake reports are submitted. These are things we have already experienced on our side. You are a man of modern times, so let us two join forces. You can take advantage of my experience, and you can pull me along. It does not come naturally to me to walk with you. I have an aristocratic mindset; I have grown old with this, my way of life."

There was no way I could have cooperated with him; that was not even a remote possibility. However, it is true that I was accused of being soft towards the prime minister. Thuldaju used to say so, and King Tribhuvan himself. The king was apparently given to telling Thuldaju, "I wish to remove the prime minister, but the home minister does not agree." Truth be told, I saw no cause for the prime minister's dismissal. Of course,

there was that first incident, but that moment passed.

It was under such circumstances that India started pressurising the prime minister. It was perhaps June 1951, and Mohan Shumshere had gone to Delhi. I, too, had been invited, and I was there. Jawaharlalji had called us over to advise us to cooperate. He harangued me for a total of nine hours, in meetings lasting two or three hours over the course of three days. I was weary by the end of it. He talked loftily of the spirit of togetherness, and this and that, whereas the real problems were quite different. I do not know what he discussed with Mohan Shumshere. One day, I emerged from Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's office feeling quite unsettled, and headed for the Nepali embassy, where Mohan Shumshere was staying. "Where is the prime minister?" I demanded. Bijaya Shumshere came running. "Father is upstairs," he said, and took me in.

Mohan Shumshere acted a little uncomfortable. He had an appointment with the British high commissioner, and I had arrived unannounced. I said, "Mohan Shumshereji, Delhi is shaming us. I am being given a lecture, and so are you. Our differences are our own, so let us return to Kathmandu. Let us not spend a day more here." As I said this, Mohan Shumshere responded very arrogantly, "Well, sometimes it is your turn, sometimes it is mine. Now it is mine!" I immediately got up and said, "Then I am going." As I headed out, Bijaya Shumshere once again accosted me and said, "Why are you so angry? The British high commissioner is also coming. Do get acquainted with him before you go."

Mohan Shumshere then continued with what he had started, "Earlier, you came to Delhi and lobbied against us. Now, we are here setting Delhi right. That's why sometimes it's your turn, at other times it is ours." That was the message I was receiving when the high commissioner was announced. I spoke to him standing there, and he said, "I have heard a lot about you. I am glad to see the prime minister and home minister together like this." With that little introduction, I left. After that visit to Delhi, Mohan Shumshere's position was greatly strengthened.

After that, 'student politics' began in Kathmandu of the kind that is still prevalent. So you had the prime minister's politics and then there was student politics, both blindly opposed to me. The royal palace was active in this, as was India, in the name of the students, the leftists. Thuldaju was also thus engaged. All opponents were campaigning against me. The organised opposition was of course very small, no more than a handful of communists. I was facing this onslaught all alone, fighting three powers, one of which was India. I had stated earlier that an ambassador should remain an ambassador. I had issued a public statement

that he should not act as if he were chairman of a district board in India. C.P.N. Sinha had indeed served as chairman of the Muzaffarpur District Board. I said that he could not do here what he would as a district chairman, and that he must know his place.

I naturally knew how to show respect to people, but back then I did not know the language of the court, nor do I now. I improved somewhat over time, but back then I was completely uninitiated. Even today, I find it difficult to say *marji* or *hajur*. I was unaware, for example, that it is only the king who commands a *hukum*, and that *marji* was used for others. However, I had my own way with people. King Tribhuvan would always say “*aanunus*” and “*basnus*” and point to his own couch.

I remember an incident once when there was a football match, it was between the police and the army or something similar. The seating area was packed and I had got there late. There was space reserved for VIPs, and the king’s family had already arrived. They provided me a chair as I arrived, and I took it. Subarnaji and the others were a little at the back. Seeing me, King Tribhuvan said, “Come on over.” I did, but saw that there was no space there on the sofa, which was taken up by him and his two sons. The king again addressed me, “No, we can squeeze in. Come over.” And so I fitted myself in next to him, as the king had directed.

The newspapers ridiculed me after that, saying that I was arrogant and ignorant. They ridiculed me then just as they do today. When you are packed in like that on a sofa, it is not possible to sit normally. There was space for just one leg, so I crossed my legs. As I did so, it turned out, one of my shoes pointed towards the monarch. They lampooned me for that as well—not only did he dare sit with the king, he showed his sole to the king! That is how they interpreted everything I did.

Of course, even though I did not know court etiquette, I was not unaware of what I was doing. I felt it was important for the people who had been kept forcibly down by the kings to be shown through such actions that we were now equals, that we can indeed sit on the same couch. So, that was also an effort on my part to send a message even though it was also something that came naturally to me and was a part of my bearing.

Our cabinet was heavily laden with responsibilities. Beyond organising the government, our tasks included streamlining the administration, giving a new direction to public service, and appointing independent judges. There was also the task of putting together an interim constitution for our interim government, a job that was assigned to the Home Ministry. I believe that the document we produced then could, even today, set an example for a democratic system. That interim constitution

was drafted to carry over until, as announced by the king in his proclamation, a constitution was adopted by a constituent assembly. We spent a lot of effort on that constitution, which guaranteed an independent judiciary, a public service commission, and the structures for free and fair elections. There were a couple of instances where the internal security laws could be activated, but they would have to be brought before the cabinet. This was a feature introduced to ensure that the Home Ministry did not usurp extraordinary powers. I believe that that draft prepared by us stands as an example for the country today.

We had come to take charge of an exploitative state, which had nothing in the name of administration. It is completely false when researchers today claim that during the Rana times there was this and that type of administration. Everything used to run on the orders of one or two persons. For example, as I said earlier, there was no Ministry of Home Affairs. You searched high and low for a secretary without finding one. The chief of the Muluki Adda office was the commander-in-chief and, as Babar Shumshere told me, all he would do when a plea came up was to pass an order there and then. That was the kind of administration we inherited, and we had the responsibility of converting this into a modern and democratic setup. Plus, we also had to organise elections.

We had to appoint an election commissioner. A census had to be carried out before an election could be contemplated. Back then, too, we referred to the '*panchayat*'. There was a man named Kulnath Lohani who stayed around for a long time and whom I liked a lot. He was in charge of the *panchayats*. I called him over and said, "You are to prepare for the elections and do whatever is required for the exercise." He agreed, and a department was given to him to complete the work. He worked wisely and with great integrity. He was a good man. I do not know where he is today.

Then we had to reform the civil administration in the districts. Governors had to be appointed at various places, and an attitudinal change had to be achieved among the appointees. They should learn to take decisions by themselves, and not always wait for orders from the centre. A government secretariat had to be set up, as at that time we did not have one. We organised a secretariat only after Mohan Shumshere vacated Singha Darbar. We were in such a poor state otherwise, with the home minister having to sign the public's petrol coupons. Disoriented by such useless little responsibilities, we were kept from fully focusing on our larger goals.

We were committed to land reform, a subject that we were constantly engaged with in my ministry. My view was that there could be no economic

advance if the tiller did not own the land. The only other cabinet member to insist on this, and to support me, was Subarnaji. We are the ones who brought the term '*mohiyani hak*' into use and emphasised the need to protect tenants' rights. We were working on so many different fronts at the same time. It was such a challenge to create an administration and institutions of government out of a vacuum. I had to work at it as the leader of the progressive force in the government and as home minister. In this, I received no support from my party.

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Then the king began his capers, and there were some misunderstandings between us. Let me provide an example. It was King Tribhuvan's birthday, and I had come back from my tour of the East. In Ilam, they used to fire their guns during parades, and they gave me a gun salute when I arrived. I was also given gun salutes at every farewell. They also had a cannon in Ilam, and when they fired the guns, the cannon also got fired. The Indian ambassador apparently went to the royal palace and said, "Your Majesty, what is this? Did you give the order for B.P. Koirala to be given a cannon salute?" I had not even returned from my tour, but the ambassador was already trying to set the king against me. "This is what happened there, and he got so many cannon salutes," he reported to the king.

When I arrived, the king called me and asked, "Tell me, were the cannons used in your salute over there?"

I replied, "The cannons were fired, and so were the guns."

"How many cannons?"

"I do not know how many; they were blasting away. They gave me a gun salute."

Then Tribhuvan turned to me and said, "See, he came and tattled to me in order to spoil our relationship. The authority to permit cannon salutes rests with the king, for example allowing 10 cannon rounds, or 20, which is what the king gets. He comes to me and says, 'Sarkar, did you order the home minister to get a cannon salute?' He is trying to drive a wedge between us. You had better be on guard."

There was a good understanding between King Tribhuvan and me. He was also someone who liked having fun, and was not an introvert like his son, Mahendra. Tribhuvan enjoyed himself, and he loved dancing. I did not know how to dance, but I liked music and cinema, and so the king used to organise private showings.

After I had stayed in the royal palace for a couple of weeks, Kaiser Shumshere invited me to move into a house he had built for his daughter nearby, where the Malla Hotel stands today. I did not have a house to stay in, and as home minister was staying as a guest of the king's. This situation was untenable as far as my work was concerned, for anyone could not just visit me in the royal palace. The bungalow offered by Kaiser Shumshere was nice and clean; its very name was 'Rangamahar' and it had a large garden. He said, "I do not need this house right now, only after my daughter gets married. You can stay here as long as you want." I shifted to the house offered by Kaiser Shumshere, and my office also moved there with me. After Singha Darbar was vacated by Mohan Shumshere, the Home Ministry shifted in there.

One day, which happened to be his birthday, the king called me on the phone and said, "There is a special show to mark my birth anniversary. Come, and bring Sushilaji along." I was staying at Rangamahar at that time, and I agreed to come. The king was given to calling often, and ordering me to "come right over". If I protested that I was in my dressing gown and *chappals*, he would reply, "That's fine, just come as you are." I would hurry over in my car, and the people at the office would bite their tongue as they saw me go. But with this display, I was also deliberately trying to show that if a few selected persons like Mahabir Shumshere, for example, could do this, then why not me? This of course gave some the opportunity to tattle to the king, but I was only doing what the king had said, "Come as you are; there is no need to change."

Upon receiving the invitation to attend his birthday celebration, I took Sushila along. Firstly, a short and uninteresting English movie was screened. There were the two queens and the palace officials present, not many others had been invited. I think Mahabir Shumshere was there, as well as all three princes. Mahendra told me later that he was not there, but I think he was. After the screening, we emerged into where, at that time, there was a foyer with large columns. The two queens waited demurely on the side while Sushila and I went up to take our leave of the king. He looked towards Sushila and said, "The home minister and I are having a meal together today, so please do not wait for him."

The king also did not let the queens tarry there. Nara Shumshere was there, as was the education minister, Nripajang Rana. Some communication, which I did not follow, took place. The king instructed either Nara Shumshere or Yog Bikram to take the party to a certain place. It was already dusk when the king, myself and the three princes arrived at the residence of Samrajya Shumshere, who at that time was known for giving grand

parties. The parties back then happened either at his place or at the Indian embassy. The events at Samrajya Shumshere's used to get quite wild, and spirits would flow like water. Since the occasion was the king's birthday, there were no holds barred. There were army officers present, some generals, and some very pretty young women.

The liquor began to flow, and the dancing began. I noticed that things were a little too risqué. There had to be some decorum at a party the king was attending, and I was also present. If it had been only the army officers, you could even have said this is a tradition, but there were many civilians present, plus the king was there with his relations. I did not like it. It seemed that there was a young woman the king liked, and he used to meet her there. She was, in fact, kept there for the king. Indeed, Samrajya Shumshere had arranged for a female companion for everyone gathered there. The king's companion was a little flirtatious. I remember her well because I had talked about her with Nepal Rajyalaxmi, who took that girl in when the king died. Once she pointed her out to me and asked, "Isn't this the girl you remember?" She then called the woman over and said, "Come on, dance, like you used to dance in front of the king." Then she was asked to dance with me, but I said, "I cannot dance." At that time, I was no longer home minister.

There were cubicles in Samrajya's *darbar*, and before long the men paired with the girls and disappeared into the darkness. I did not know how to dance, and I was not going to engage in such inappropriate behaviour. I sensed that the wives of the two princes were also feeling uncomfortable. Their husbands were dancing on the floor with some others, and they, too, would occasionally go to the dance floor. I was sitting with the two of them on a sofa, and I asked them, "Why did you agree to come to such a place?" They replied, "It was Samrajya's order. What could we do? How could we refuse?" They were not having fun, and I was also feeling uneasy, and so I suggested, "Let's leave." I had come in their car, and did not have my own to get back.

After the dance was over, we were taken to another room to watch a drama. It was almost one in the morning, and I was used to going to bed by nine or ten, after dinner. The king had ordered that no one should provide the home minister with transport. The drama itself was also a bit off colour. They pulled the king, who was completely drunk, up to the stage and made him dance.

A daughter of the Palpa commander-in-chief's was present, and she turned to me and said, "You have yet to appoint a woman governor. Why don't you appoint me?" She was a very active woman, someone who

would have been able as governor even during those days of people power. She had become very close to me.

But I replied, "In today's revolutionary conditions, with trouble everywhere, it will be hard for a woman to run the administration."

To which, she responded, "It seems you were willing to take our help during the uprising but not now in the administration!"

She started arguing, and said, "I will get the king to order you."

She went and brought the king over, and he said, "Come on, Bishweshwar Babu, you should have at least one woman governor."

"I may. But this is hardly the place to discuss the matter."

The king said, "She will be able to do it, make her a governor."

I said, "Your Majesty is in such a state right now that this is not the time to follow your orders. We can talk about it later."

Then dinner was served, and it must have been 2 am by the time it was over. The king sent one woman after another to catch me by the hand and try and take me towards the dance floor. Seeing me refuse, he said, "Shame on you, you passionless man. Men are expected to ask the women for a dance, and here you are refusing the approach of women!" Finally, the king seemed to understand and he turned to Nara Shumshere and said, "Okay, take the home minister home, as well as my daughters-in-law." Nara Shumshere reached me first to Rangamaharal and then the ladies to Tahachal. That party ran till seven in the morning. When I met the king a few days later, I told him, "That was quite inappropriate."

Some event like that used to happen every few days. Once, Jawaharlalji told me in Delhi, "This king, your king, comes to Calcutta, goes to Bombay, mingles with women and low-grade businessmen and Sindhis. This is not fitting behaviour. You must advise the king on this."

I said, "Do you think the king will go by what I say? He is your friend, why don't you tell him?"

He said, "How can I say something like that to a head of state? But if an opportunity presents itself, I will certainly tell him."

"This is not good for the king." That was what Jawaharlalji said,

And then, the Indian ambassador, C.P.N. Sinha, suggested, "Why don't you make sure that there are pretty women within the palace?" The ambassador's worry was that others might make contact with the king when he was out of the palace walls, or perhaps he was genuinely worried about the king's image. There is no doubt that Jawaharlalji's own worry had to do only with the king's honour.

At around that time, Biju Patnaik came to Nepal. I had had a good relationship with him for a long time. He, too, gave me some advice, "I get

the sense that you too do a bit of womanising.”

Even though he had told me he would not, it turned out that Jawaharlalji did write a letter, a long one, to King Tribhuvan. The letter was a page and half on foolscap-sized paper which was coloured slightly green. The ambassador delivered the communication, and upon reading it the king became red with rage. C.P.N. Sinha, who had obviously read a copy of the letter, told the king that it had resulted from my tattling to Jawaharlalji a few days earlier. The king told me this.

The letter was nicely written, but the bombshell was towards the end: “I have to touch upon a sensitive matter, but take the liberty as a friend who can do so. You are not only the king of your country, you are also the leader of a revolution, and everyone’s eyes are on you. It is not only your citizens, the whole world is watching you. You should not come to these large cities of India so often, and perhaps it would be advisable to maintain some self-control?”

Jawaharlalji used good language, and because it was a sensitive matter, he had written it as a friend. The reason the king got angry with me was that he believed the letter was a result of my reporting to Jawaharlalji. He called me over to the palace.

“Why did you have to go and tattle to the prime minister of another country? You could have said this to me in my person.” Handing me the letter, King Tribhuvan said, “Read it.”

I went through it, and asked, “So how is it that I have tattled?”

“The Indian ambassador said so.”

There was, of course, some truth in how Jawaharlalji had come to write the letter. We had indeed discussed the topic, and I had told Jawaharlalji, “You should not mention that we have talked.”

I was now in a very difficult situation, with the king livid. Trying to calm him down, I said, “These things never came up between us. He must have thought of it himself. I see no reason for you to be so angry with me.”

The king did not forgive me on that matter. The palace courtiers were forever setting me up: “Earlier, the prime ministers were powerful. These days, the king is not respected at all. The home minister sits with his feet pointing at you,” and so on and so forth. Once or twice, the king himself told me, “You know, my personality is close to yours, and quite different from Matrika Babu’s. And yet I do not know why we are not able to get along.”

The king used to dance, and I used to like that. I used to drink. Thuldaju, on the other hand, particularly back then, would not even eat lunch without changing his clothes. A Bahuni cook used to prepare his meals

and he would eat sitting on a wooden pirka. If I went to his house, I had to sit ritually 'beneath' and separate from him in the kitchen for my meal. Such were his strictures. King Tribhuvan would say, "I cannot get along with Matrika Babu on other matters, but his ideas match with mine. This does not happen with you."

Thus the king, too, was dissatisfied with me. One of his daughters was getting married, and I said that seven lakh rupees should be enough for the expenses. He felt that that was a small amount, but then the government had no money. This, too, contributed to his unhappiness with me.

The large and powerful landowners were also angry with me. Landed gentry all over the country were feeling very insecure. As far as *birta* land was concerned, our plan was to abolish it completely. I was also thinking of land reform, and this was being discussed among the public. That entire class was therefore quite troubled, and directed its ire at me. Then there were the opposition parties, of the same ilk as today's. After we arrived here, Dilli Raman Regmi came over to meet us as president of the National Congress. Rishikesh Shaha came as his secretary. The former was staying at Rishikesh Shaha's house in Kalimati, and there was much speculation of his being manipulated by Mohan Shumshere.

Newspapers, whose sole role was to thwart me, began to emerge. All the papers used to write against me. Tanka Prasad also had a similar approach, and he would create disturbances through the students. While I was home minister, Tanka Prasad once went to meet Jawaharlalji and claimed, "I am the leader of a large united front." Jawaharlalji asked him, "So, which parties are members of the front?" He replied, "The Student Union, the Student Federation," and he named a few more. Jawaharlalji told me, "He came and told me that he is the leader of a united front, and gave the names of four or five students' groups."

They all used to be arrayed in opposition to me. As far as the Indian ambassador was concerned, he had started a whole *jihad* against me.

I had arrested some people at that time, and the students demanded that I release them all. I replied, "You are allowed to hold meetings after getting permission. Apply, and you can hold your meetings." One day, the students announced that they would defy the ban on meetings. I remained silent. The law would take its course, and the police would act if the students decided to something which was prohibited.

At this point, I want to relate an incident. The cabinet decided to set up a *pradhan nyayalaya*, or supreme court. We had named the court '*nyayalaya*', which King Mahendra later changed to '*adalat*'. I do not know why he

similarly named the Supreme Court '*Sarbochcha Adalat*'. Having decided to set up a supreme court, we needed a chief justice, and we did not have a person with the required aptitude. I insisted that we must get a Nepali, but we could not find anyone capable. The prime minister proposed Kali Babu, with the sole purpose of making me look bad for having appointed my own brother-in-law. Besides, I was not convinced about Kali Babu's abilities, nor did I trust his judicial integrity. I rejected his name without a second thought.

I then recommended Hari Prasad Pradhan, a lawyer and senior partner under whom I had practised while in Darjeeling. I said I did not know whether he would agree to the proposal. All the members of the cabinet said, "If you know him well, Hari Prasad is fine with us." The prime minister concurred, we informed him, and he came. If you go back to his rulings, you will find that he was a man of integrity. He was trying to take the judiciary on a fine and independent path. That was how we found a chief justice.

In India, Rammanohar Lohia was engaged in a vicious propaganda campaign against me. There is another story there. He would say, for example, "B.P. Koirala is propping up his brothers and nephews," whereas I was doing nothing of the kind. Koshu, my brother Keshav Prasad Koirala, was the military governor of Biratnagar. He resigned as soon as our government was formed. I appointed Bhupal Man Singh in his place, a man suggested by Thuldaju. But here was Lohia spreading the word that I was appointing my relations.

India was preparing for its first general election in 1952, and the socialists were preparing to enter the fray. They needed some funds and they had come to me to see if I could help. I asked Ganesh Manji, "Could we arrange for some money?" Ganesh Manji was capable of doing these things. It turned out that the owner of Ranjana Cinema, Bal Krishna Sahu, had received a licence to export rice from Bhairahawa. Back then, everything was controlled, including cloth and other goods. I learnt that he would make a profit of seven lakh rupees from the transaction. And so Ganesh Manji extracted one lakh of that profit from him, and I gave the money to Jayaprakashji. One lakh was a huge amount back then, and Jayaprakashji said to me, "I have never received so much money before this." As they were going up for elections, they were happy to receive that amount. Someone told Jawaharlalji about this, and he is said to have become incensed. But I do not believe that; he would not get angry just because we gave one lakh rupees to the socialists.

Along our border regions, our people sympathised with the socialists

and were raising money for them—five thousand, ten thousand rupees. Towards Darbhanga, they received funds from the Janakpur people. There could have been a negative fallout from all this activity, but I do not know if there was any. Many have suggested that India's attitude towards me was the result of this support given to the socialists, but I do not think so. The main reason for this chill towards me, I believe, was that I was engaged in developing an independent policy for Nepal.

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The students started their agitation. Most of those who seemed like student activists were actually secret service agents. I believe there are undercover people in student's movements, and the students themselves will tell you not to trust this person or that. That is how it was back then as well, and I can even remember the names of a couple of them.

So, the students came to say that they would hold a protest meeting in the evening and call for a boycott. I told them to get permission. "We won't get permission," they said, and I made as if to interpret what they were saying: "In which case, just give a notice to the home minister that you are holding a meeting." To that, they replied, "We are not getting your permission." Finally, I said, "Do what you will."

When they proceeded with their meeting, I instructed the police not to react. After all, what harm could a meeting do? They created quite a ruckus, but the police stayed put. It was already evening when they decided to march in a demonstration, but even then the police remained spectators. Then the throng laid siege to the police headquarters at Hanuman Dhoka. It was only when they wrested a gun away from an armed guard at the gate that the officers gave the order to fire. A couple of people were hit; one died and the other was wounded. One man was fatally injured, but the other man was an undercover agent with the name of Saiduddin. He was a police operative, and Mohan Shumshere subsequently picked up the cost of his treatment. Much later, he was still an undercover agent. Surya Babu knows about this matter from when he was home minister. That attack on the police station was the handiwork of instigators, and shots were fired.

I was unaware of the shooting, and the correspondent of Press Trust of India came and said, "There was firing over at Hanuman Dhoka. What is happening? What is your reaction?"

I replied, "It cannot be. I would know if shots had been fired."

He said, "I have just come from there. I was present. One died in hospital and another has been admitted."

"Well, I have not heard of it."

"Is it the government's version that there has been no firing?"

"No, that's not what I said. I just do not have the information. Wait, I will call the police headquarters."

They told me everything over the phone, and then I told the reporter what I had found out.

They made that incident stand in as one of the reasons for my ouster. Chinia Kaji, the man who died from the bullet, was from our own party. He was not a leader; he did not have a position. The police fired into the crowd, he got hit and died in hospital. The next day, they decided to take his body out in a procession. I said, "I will not allow that, for it could incite violence."

The cabinet met in extraordinary session at the royal palace under the king's chairmanship, the same way it had met after I was attacked by the mob earlier. I was stood up like an accused, with everyone attacking and blaming me. That man Govinda Narayan then spoke up, "What's happening to this country? Students are being killed in Kathmandu's alleys like stray dogs." That angered me, and I responded, "Govinda Narayan, you are a civil servant from UP. Tell me one city in UP where students have not been killed with your orders. Don't talk nonsense." He kept quiet. He had not expected me to react.

But I was alone there in the cabinet. My point was that the body of the deceased could not be allowed to be part of a public procession, for that would only encourage destructive elements and the government would look weak. In these difficult revolutionary times, if a destructive-minded force got even a whiff of the government's condition, it could be expected to take full advantage of the situation. That was my position, and that the body of the dead man should be quietly handed over to his family rather than be made an object of exhibition. I pleaded that we would not be able to control the fallout if the body were carried around in a procession. No one in the cabinet could respond satisfactorily to that point.

It was necessary to go to the hospital and take stock of the situation. There was a crowd of thousands there, demanding that the body be handed over. I said that the government could not afford to run scared of the mob. No government, particularly one with a revolutionary pedigree, could survive if it succumbed to the momentary demands of the masses. Yagya Bahadur Basnet, an engineer who was then the health minister, was asked to go to the hospital to check out the circumstances. We decided to let the

demonstration proceed, but only if it was disciplined. Yagya Bahadur Basnet went over, met some leaders in the crowd, and came back to report to the waiting cabinet that the crowd was controlled and that it could be expected to hold a rally peacefully.

Only the communists can organise the kind of demonstration that then took place. Out in the front, there was the flag of the communists, but because we—because Matrika Babu—could not be seen to be lagging behind, there was a flag of our party as well. There was a flag there of pretty much every party that existed at that time. The demonstration was moving towards the cremation *ghats*, and I had been told that this would be an organised affair. The slogans charged me with being a murderer.

I had been contemplating that I had to resign at some point, rather dramatically, because the public was being led astray with incidents of this kind. At every point, there was protest from some quarter or other, there was no cooperation, and I was not able to get my point across. I would be free of all these troubles if I simply resigned. While in government, one had special responsibilities about law and administration, but here, my own party was showing itself ready to evade those responsibilities. Why should I remain in this government?

I forget the date of that firing, but the moment I was waiting for arrived with a programme to mark "Revolution Day", on 11 November. That was the day the king had escaped from Kathmandu. There was to be a flag-raising in front of our party office, and I was invited. I spoke on the occasion and announced that I would go straight from there to Radio Nepal to announce my resignation. From there, I would go to the royal palace and hand in my papers to the king.

The party office at that time was at the corner of a road leading into Naya Sadak, and after speaking at the flag-raising I went straight to Radio Nepal and made my announcement on air, explaining the state of the country and why I was resigning. That speech of mine must be on tape somewhere, and I wish it were part of this record. In fact, two or three of my speeches and statements should be part of the record, as they will help in understanding my situation. There must be copies of speeches I made as home minister available in the newspapers of the day. If the government allows it, its records would also have them.

After speaking over the radio, I went straight to the royal palace and told the king, "Please take this, my resignation." The king protested, "What is the hurry? Why did you have to go on air and announce your resignation, without even consulting me?" I replied, "There is no point discussing this now. The public is being incited against the home minister.

I wanted to take the people into confidence before handing in the resignation, that's why I did what I did." The king replied, "This was a matter between you and me, between the king and the home minister. I should have been informed earlier, rather than have to hear it on the radio." I was in a temper, and I put my points forward to the king.

The government fell as soon as I handed in my resignation. It was meant to collapse as soon as the leader of one or the other faction resigned, which removed that whole faction from the coalition. After our side left the government, that entire government fell and it took the prime minister down with it. The king asked the members of the council of ministers to continue in their posts until he made alternative arrangements. He then sent over official 'thank you' notes, as is customary. The next step was to set up the new cabinet, and Matrika Babu came in as its head.

Before this, an important event had taken place at Sashi Bhawan, where a meeting had been called by my opposition. It could even be called the Sashi Bhawan Affair. There were two or three serious problems that confronted the nation when I was home minister, important national and international topics as well as the matter of internal peace and security. However, these were not the issues raised at that meeting, which was called with the sole intention of attacking me. When I arrived, I saw that the poet Kedarman Byathit was speaking most viciously against me. There are probably few people as quarrelsome as Byathit. Thuldaju did not speak much, but he egged Byathit on. All kinds of people had gathered there to censure me, and they all boycotted the meeting after saying their set pieces and demanding disciplinary action against me.

I became a bit emotional, and demanded to know, "Who is it that's going to carry out the disciplinary action?" Thuldaju tried to diffuse the situation by saying, "Okay, enough has been said." Four or five people refused to take his advice and continued their call for disciplinary action, after which they walked out of the meeting. Byathit was the leader of that group. He had walked out of a few other meetings in that manner. For example, he and Ram Narayan Mishra walked out of our Janakpur meeting when I was party president. The Sashi Bhawan affair records must exist somewhere. Some of the points that I made there are noteworthy, particularly what I said regarding the firing on the students. I doubt that what I said there has been printed outside.

All those attacking me in there were hangers-on of Thuldaju, and even today they hover around him. After I resigned, there was the matter of how to set up the new council of ministers. It would have to be a Nepali Congress government, of course, for it was the largest party and none of

the others came close. The rules we had adopted called for a government to be formed by the largest party. Then the question was which individuals from the Nepali Congress would form the government. It was impossible to know whom the king was leaning towards although it was probably not towards me as he would have invited trouble by appointing me. Besides, he had been put on guard by the palace courtiers who distrusted me for not giving them due importance.

As our Working Committee sat to discuss the matter, Mahabir Shumshere and a few others made a strong pitch for Thuldaju as head of the new government. Kisunji and Subarnaji were for me, and Surya Babu wavered somewhere in between. I thought that the majority would probably support me, but a vote was not held. Dali, a supporter of Matrika Babu's, said, "If we pass a resolution calling for a government under BP, the king will not agree and neither will India." He added, "Jawaharlalji has written a letter to the king saying that BP is not acceptable to the Indian government."

Now the question was whether Jawaharlalji had indeed written such a letter. If he had, then even I would have to think twice. It was decided that a delegation would go to the king and try to read his mind, and also try to discover whether some communication had been received by the palace from Delhi. Three members of the Working Committee made up that delegation, Surya Babu, Subarnaji and Kisunji. Our meeting was being held at Mahabir Shumshere's, and they left from there straight for the royal palace. There, they indeed saw that letter from Jawaharlalji to the king. They came back and told us the views of the king and of others.

I decided that it would not be advisable to be too enthusiastic when neither the king nor India wanted me. That was one problem. Besides, there was also the possibility that the crowds could be manipulated with my presence. And so I said, "It's okay with me. Let it be Thuldaju." As soon as I said that, Thuldaju prepared to go to the royal palace. The official *mayalpos-surwal* attire was waiting in his bedroom, and he donned it and was off to the royal palace within 15 minutes of our delegation's return. He was granted an audience and received the nomination. He returned as prime minister on the basis of being the president of the country's largest party, one which had the most trust among the people. He was sworn in two or three days after that.

I remember one event, the last one I attended as home minister, given by Radio Nepal within the Singha Darbar compound. This was before I resigned. The songs were very nice, and had been organised by Bal Krishna

Sama. All the eminent musical personalities were gathered there, and the programme was being aired live. They put me up in the front, and with tears in their eyes the radio artistes were shouting, "Hail, brave Bishweshwar." I felt touched, and remember thinking, "At least they are with me."

Thereafter, I was out of my position. Thuldaju formed the single-party government of the Nepali Congress. All whom he had nominated became ministers, including Subarnaji, Surya Prasad, Ganesh Man Singh, Bhadrakali Mishra, Mahendra Bikram, and others. Only I was left out. Thuldaju then set up an investigation commission under the chairmanship of Hora Prasad Joshi to look into the affair of the students. Within three days, it presented its report, stating that the firing had occurred as a result of B.P. Koirala's dictatorial tendencies. It was such a shameful report that even Thuldaju was unwilling to publish it.

After that, India started a vilification campaign against me, with its press arrayed on one side. It will be important to study the Indian newspapers of the day to understand what I am saying. I, too, started a campaign against India at that time. I called press conferences in Benaras, where I said, "The Indian ambassador, C.P.N. Sinha, wishes that our country be like his district board, and he regards himself as chairman of that district board." This was hardly something that they would have liked, but it was printed in the papers there. There was no question of them not printing my point of view.

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I decided to tour the country, and headed out with a good amount of enthusiasm. I started from Biratnagar in the east and travelled across the length of the country to end up in Palpa. And there was not one place where I did not face a protest. The extremists had always been hostile to me, and added to this was Thuldaju's opposition.

Thuldaju had Sushila and me assaulted at a mass meeting in Kathmandu. He used *goondas* and Tripurbar Singh was behind the affair. There was someone named Basupasa, who had a revolver with him. While I was speaking before the rally, Basupasa came up to the podium and shoved me and attacked me. Then Thuldaju had a book published, *Sacchi Kahani, Dusron ki Juwani* (True Stories, from Others' Mouths), which was like a collection of clippings from Indian newspapers. That, too, is worth reading to understand the kind of assaults I had to confront.

I was not, however, cowed by the attacks. When in the course of the tour I arrived in Palpa, I found that they were adamant about preventing me from entering the town. "Murderer! Go back!" was the slogan they used, but I insisted on entering the town. It was quite a climb to get up there, and the road was difficult. Along the road, they had tied bones and skeletons on bamboo poles, and had put up bamboo barriers across the path. They threw stones down at us, tried to hit me from the trail-side, and also tried to splatter me with black paint.

They could not get close to me, however, because I was protected by Kashi Nath Gautam and Dr Tribeni Prasad Pradhan. What should have taken 20 or 25 minutes took three hours. The copper and bronze *gaagri* put out for my arrival had all been damaged, as were the welcome arches. The place where I was to lodge was in a shambles, with its lights broken. I got in at nine at night and was furious at all that.

We had a public meeting called for the next day, but there was no certainty that it would be held. I told Kashi Nath, "Bring people in from the villages tomorrow. The meeting must succeed. If anyone so much as squeaks, we will get them." I said this aloud so that I was heard. Only to him, I said, "We will hold the meeting only if you can manage. If not, forget it."

They worked through the night to organise that rally and it turned out to be one of our biggest ever. I was able to make my address and it was a very peaceful event. There were a couple of Americans present in Palpa at that time, and I think the famous ornithologist S. Dillon Ripley was also there. I received a letter from someone who had heard of all this from them, saying, "The world should know how bravely you have been fighting to introduce democratic standards. We are proud of you."

While I was still there with my party colleagues, I heard of the revolt by K.I. Singh in Kathmandu. The news came over the radio, and Ganesh Manji was apparently engaged in negotiations. I have always found that Ganesh Manji acts as a go-between; this is because he is trusted where others aren't. K.I. Singh and others also had faith in him. Ganesh Manji never had to face the kind of condemnation I did. As a member of my council of ministers, he should have shared the accusations that came our way, but he was also a minister subsequently under Thuldaju. All this points to Ganesh Manji's political circumspection.

So, Ganesh Manji carried out the negotiations, keeping in touch with both sides. K.I. Singh had activated the army and the ministers had all fled to the royal palace. Soldiers were about, guns in hand, and it

was not clear what was to be done. K.I. Singh took some time getting his men released from the jail in Nakkhu, even as the king was trying to have him surrounded. After a roll call to ensure that all of his 60 supporters were free, K.I. Singh distributed arms among them and marched with them out of Kathmandu Valley. Hearing all this in Palpa, I decided that in the moment of crisis we should not have divisions within the party. I therefore sent a cablegram to Thuldaju assuring him of my complete support. That message would have had no meaning if the revolt had succeeded, of course.

There is one thing that I forgot to mention earlier, a touching incident the day of Thuldaju's swearing-in. Subarnaji, his wife and his younger sister came to me with a garland. He put that nice garland of *dubo* on me, as well as *tika* on my forehead. With tears in his eyes, he said, "You are the one who should have been sworn in as prime minister today. You are the one who did everything to bring this day about, who made it possible." I was touched to the core to learn that that was what he, his wife and his sister believed. He stayed there for a while lamenting, and I said, "Let it be. I have no regrets."

There was another drama on the night of Thuldaju's swearing-in. Devendra was staying with me at the time. At about ten or eleven, when I was already asleep, Yakthumba and a couple of other officers came rushing in. He said excitedly, "Shall I arrest everyone? Including the prime minister? You just have to say it, and I shall do it." Yakthumba continued, "We have been given guard duty and I can have everyone behind bars. I have placed trustworthy officers in each minister's house, and will be able to arrest each and every one. You have to decide right away. Tomorrow will be too late."

I said to Yakthumba, "Why are you doing this? Give me time to think."

He said, "I will give you till three in the morning, because that is the time we have to act."

I was in half a mind to follow his suggestion, because I was very angry. Devendra came over and asked me in Hindi, "Who were those people?" I told him what Yakthumba had suggested, and he exclaimed, "No, no, you should not do this! You will lose respect, for they will all think you are power-hungry. It is, after all, your party in government. Besides, India will also get angry. It will only be a momentary solution, for then you will have to fight both the king and India."

Yakthumba and others were saying, "We will even surround the royal palace." They could have done that, of course, for they had the weapons. But Devendra stopped me, and I too had begun to doubt the

appropriateness of such an action. So when Yakthumba came over at 3 am, I said, "Let it be. Drop the idea."

"Think again!" he appealed, and I said, "I will not do it. Give your full support to this new government." He saluted, and departed.

I have discussed this matter with two people. One of them was Narendra Dev, whose response was, "You made a mistake." I responded, "It would have led to a clash with India." His reply was, "You would have come to power and asked India, 'What is it you want?'"

The other person with whom I had shared this confidence was Milovan Djilas, whom I had got to know when I attended the Asian Socialist Conference for the first time. Later, I developed a personal friendship with him. Babler had also come to that meeting. I developed a nice friendship with them as well. He used to call Sushila by her first name. Babler spoke good English, while Djilas was not that proficient.

When I told him about the affair, Djilas asked me, "So, why didn't you do it? Where were your revolutionary troops? What did you do with them?"

"We merged them into the police and army; they are not in our control now."

Making a gesture of exasperation, he said, "That was foolish!"

When I told him about Yakthumba's suggestion, he once again indicated his exasperation.

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Let me say a few things about K.I. Singh. He never accepted the Delhi "agreement" or "solution," or whatever it was called. His point was, "I will not cease fire until I can fulfil my goal of taking Bhairahawa." He had 300 troops with him, and he rejected compromise and revolted against the government. It was then that I ordered his arrest. As home minister, I also gave a similar order for the capture of Balchandra Sharma who, according to reports, was actively engaged in looting and wreaking havoc in his area. I think the border police, but not the military, were used to carrying out arrests.

K.I. Singh and Balchandra Sharma were kept in Bhairahawa after their arrest. Kumbha Singh, Mohan Shumshere's appointee, was governor there. P.B. Malla, whom I referred to earlier, was also in Bhairahawa. They got together and conspired to get K.I. Singh in touch with Mohan Shumshere, with P.B. Malla as the intermediary. Hari Shumshere sent expenses over, for which he had to sell a gold plate. K I. Singh escaped from jail, and I had to use the help of the Indian military to arrest him. That was how he was brought to Kathmandu. All this happened while I was in the council of ministers.

Around that time, a conference was called in Raxaul to address the matter of looting in the border areas, where civil administration had all but disappeared. We did not have enough policemen. Arms used in our revolution were entering India, but weapons were coming over to our side from India as well. We had organised the Raxaul conference between our governors and India's district magistrates to handle this law and order problem. I chaired the meeting and the Indian ambassador, too, was present. We needed to bring the extraordinary situation under control, and we discussed a myriad of issues, including the matter of extradition of detainees by either side.

I had ordered the release of Balchandra Sharma before that meeting. I had also asked that K.I. Singh be treated well during his incarceration, and that was being done. Present at that conference was the commissioner of Gorakhpur, a Bahun. He seemed to be a relation of someone in Marchawar who had been tormented by K.I. Singh's people. The feudal landlord of Marchawar seemed to have been extremely exploitative, and this man was related to him. The Gorakhpur commissioner had wanted to teach Balchandra Sharma a lesson, so he remonstrated, "You took our help in catching that murderer, that bandit, and then you went and released him without consulting with us!"

I replied, "How can you call him a murderer? I, too, have killed during our revolution. And what do you call 'loot'? During the revolution, in the absence of legislation I raised a tax in order support my troops. Your definition of 'murder' and 'loot' need not apply during times of revolution, and you cannot give it the colour of a crime in peacetime. The situation in Biratnagar, for example, was extraordinary, and many people died and much property was lost. Can I describe that as murder and theft? All this happened within the bounds of revolutionary ethics. If something more serious has occurred, then it is for the revolutionary leadership to consider."

That was the principle I put forward at the Raxaul meeting, while debating the gentleman from Gorakhpur. I also made the point that Balchandra Sharma had been our prisoner. "But we helped you in his arrest," he said, and I replied, "That's fine, and we thank you for your help. But he was our prisoner, and the home minister thought it appropriate to release him."

After K.I. Singh was captured following his jailbreak, there was the question of where to hold him. I ordered him kept right there in Singha Darbar because there was no other appropriate place. I asked Ganesh Manji to ensure that he was well treated, and my plan was to release him

after a few days. K.I. Singh would say, "I want to meet BP Babu." My office was upstairs in Singha Darbar, and he was jailed in the basement below, in a guardroom. Ganesh Manji went to meet him daily and made sure that he was being treated well. I do not know if that was appropriate, but it was I who ordered it.

As long as I was home minister, he was hopeful of release, but that expectation died after my government collapsed and Matrika Babu came to power. I do believe that Hari Shumshere had a hand in the whole affair, as well as in K.I. Singh's escape. I will come back to this later.

There was a pandit, Agni Prasad Kharel, whom I had also jailed. Then there was the rebellion, and he too was out. He apparently used to brandish his pistol and shout, "Now I will rule the country!" Ganesh Manji went to meet him on the king's instructions, and that is what Agni Prasad would tell Ganesh Manji. I was gone by that time.

The whole rebellion was planned and supported by Mohan Shumshere and Hari Shumshere. K.I. Singh made good his escape and fled to Tibet before he could be nabbed. From there, he reached Peking and returned only after a few years. Upon his return, he stayed as a guest of Hari Shumshere's. It was all quite astounding, and when he returned via Tibet the king gave him a lavish welcome. That episode was quite dramatic, with rumours flying about that he had entered the country, that he was coming by this route or that. He entered the Valley via Sundarijal and stayed at a bungalow that Hari Shumshere had there. Then the question of where to keep him in Kathmandu came up. It would not have been appropriate to put him up in Hari Shumshere's own palace, so they emptied a house in Kupundole of the father-in-law of Hari Shumshere's courtier Sharada Prasad. That's where K.I. Singh moved in.

Public meetings were banned at the time, but K.I. Singh got permission to hold rallies at Tudikhel. He toured the whole country, and had two military guards by his side when he gave his speeches. At one place after another, he would announce to the crowds, "I have been assigned this task by His Majesty. I am here to listen to your problems and sorrows." Kumbha Singh, who was governor of Bhairahawa when K.I. Singh escaped from jail, joined him in the campaign. He became part of the royal palace's secret service during the time of King Mahendra. This was how K.I. Singh's image was built up and how King Mahendra helped him in this through his own father-in-law Hari Shumshere.

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After leaving government, I went on that tour, at the end of which it was decided that Matrika Babu and I had to bury our differences. Jayaprakashji was upset with me and was also involved in that effort. He told me once, "I am shaking a little. I am not angry. It is just that my heart is racing a bit." But that was indication of how agitated he was.

I had placed some points before Jayaprakashji. One was that the party president and the prime minister should not be the same person, particularly in the existing situation in which there was no structure, such as a parliament, to exercise control over the government. A prime minister must be responsible to some group that represents the public, and in this case it had to be his party organisation. For that reason, those two posts had to be filled separately. The party must keep an eye on the government and it had to exercise control. That was my view, and in response Jayaprakashji said, "How will the government be directed by the party? Will Jawaharlalji agree to that?"

I replied, "Here in India, the parliament has the function of oversight. In Nepal, we do not have a parliament, so who is the prime minister to be answerable to?"

"So you define a policy and give it to the prime minister," he suggested.

"If he fails to implement the policy, who is to challenge him on it? Who will control him?" Rather than trying to understand our specific situation, I felt that Jayaprakashji was stubbornly sticking to his point of view. I repeated once again, "He has to be responsible to some institution, some group of people."

Jayaprakashji said, "But if a party starts to exercise control, it could become a dictatorship of the party."

"But that is better than the dictatorship of an individual. Anyone can become irresponsible if he is not made answerable to one group or another."

After that discussion, it was then agreed that I would be the party president while Thuldaju remained prime minister. Thuldaju was rather clever when it came to such matters, whereas I was so straight forward that I would have these debates with Jayaprakashji. Thuldaju, on the other hand, would appeal to Jayaprakashji's emotions by praising me in his presence. He would say, "BP is too impulsive. He is a very good man and has integrity, but those people like Krishna Prasad Bhattarai get him excited and upset."

Jayaprakashji said to me, "I have heard that this quarrel has to do with

Krishna Prasad Bhattarai." It was true that Krishna Prasad Bhattarai used to support me, but there was no question of his provoking me. Thus, we arrived at an agreement that I would be party president, and the party's Working Committee would be set up jointly by the president and prime minister. One person would run the party organisation and the other the government, and Thuldaju and I both agreed not to wrangle over small matters.

Thuldaju was very skilful in the setting up of the Working Committee. "Why don't you prepare a list," he told me. Psychologically, in order to get him to agree I would include Thuldaju's supporter's names on the list. For example, in a list of 11, I would naturally put in six names from my side and five from his side. What Thuldaju would do then was take four names off that list, and add five names of his own. This would leave not even one of my people in the roster. And then he would say to Jayaprakashji, "He had 11 names on his list, out of which I removed four, and he is not agreeable to that."

Jayaprakashji would turn to me and say, "When you have agreed to cooperate, you must include his people as well." I would argue, but on the surface what Thuldaju said did seem logical. This was always Thuldaju's way. He would say, "You prepare the list," and I would try to do an even-handed job. A lawyer would understand this type of deception.

We agreed to work together in spite of all this, and I would serve as party president. We then proceeded to organise the party's general conference in Janakpur, and it turned out to be a tumultuous, memorable occasion. The president was to be elected at that meeting, with the delegates voting. Thuldaju was committed to our arrangement, so he proposed my name. His own people, however, created bedlam there. Kedarman Byathit, Bhadrakali Mishra and another 10 or 15 people walked out of the meeting. Thuldaju may have been gladdened by this turn of events, but he had not organised it. About three or four thousand delegates attended that conference. Those who left the party established another Congress, but the rest displayed a good sense of unity. I became president of the Nepali Congress.

I was aware, with regard to the relationship between the government and myself, that the fallout of the conspiracy which had removed me from government could still affect me. I was committed not to let such unpleasant turns affect the work before us. However, disagreements arose between Thuldaju and me, the prime minister and the party president. The problem was centred on four points, and reflected a fundamental difference in approach. I would like this to be a matter of record. I have

written about this as well, in the booklet titled *Agala Kadam*, in which I have explained my four points of disagreement with Thuldaju.

The first point of disagreement related to the king. Thuldaju said that the government received its authority from the king, and that because we had not yet had an election the king was the repository of power, who allowed us to run the government. This was a legalistic constitutional interpretation that was biased towards the status quo. My response was: "No, the king, too, was re-established in his position as a result of the revolution. That you are prime minister is the result of a revolution that brought not only the king but also the party into power. If we therefore do not start demanding that the king act as a constitutional head of state, later we will have to have another revolution. Today the mould is wet, so we can give any shape to the sculpture. The king is not yet established in the new setup. We should never ever say that we have received our authority from the king."

Whatever be the legal interpretation, I believed there was such a thing as revolutionary rule-making. I may have been right or wrong, but that was my argument. I believe that we must engage the king in the constitutional exercise, and because he was not the chief executive we should never let him interfere in matters of daily administration.

Besides the role of the king, my second submission was that we must carry out land reform as quickly as possible. Thuldaju, however, would only talk of maintaining the status quo. He had two arguments. One, that we did not have the legal authority to carry out basic structural change in the country, and that such authority could only be exercised constitutionally by an elected entity. Two, he insisted that the existing problems of peace and security would only be exacerbated if we started land reform. I am laying down his ideas very clearly, even though, of course, he was hardly convincing.

My third submission was that we had to keep India in its place. We were grateful to India for all the help it had provided during the change, but it should not be allowed to take unfair advantage of that fact. Thuldaju's contention, on the other hand, was that we cannot succeed if we pick a fight with India. Even today, there are many who hold this view. I am not saying that he became "pro-India", although there is no question that he had come to power with the support of India.

Fourthly, I believed the government must be responsible to the party, particularly when there was no parliament or any other elected body. In contrast, Thuldaju would maintain, "I am answerable to the king." And I would insist, "No, you must maintain trust with both the king and the

party. In today's context, the party's role is paramount because we do not have an elected legislature."

These were the four points of my disagreement with Thuldaju. Our quarrel began to escalate. He got a little carried away, and perhaps I too was a little reckless—one can judge by reading the papers of the day. They must have told Thuldaju, do not let BP get too big for his boots, and so on. We grew further and further apart, to such an extent that a special session of our Central Committee had to be called. The make-up of the Working Committee came up as a key item at the session. Our party constitution says that the Working Committee is set up by the president, and our understanding was that this would be done in consultation with the prime minister. Thuldaju would, however, take out all my nominees and pack the committee with the likes of Hora Prasad. This would leave me in the minority.

The special session of the Central Committee was held at Bishalnagar Darbar. The normal kinds of accusations were made against the government from the party's side, to which Thuldaju responded energetically. That was the time that Tulsi Giri came and tried to mediate between us, and he came into notice for the first time. He was not in the party; he was just in contact. I was staying in Bishalnagar. When the vote was held in the Central Committee, Thuldaju lost even though he had defended himself well. There were a few hundred representatives who participated, and only about 23 or 24 sided with him. After that, he boycotted the session and by the next day he had started another party, the Rastriya Praja Party.

After the resolution was adopted against him in the session, he said, "Okay, now I will resign." It turned out that he had already come to an understanding with the king, under which he had been directed to resign, start another party, and so on. So he resigned as prime minister and started another party. He announced, "I am going on a tour." He returned after a week, and the king invited him to form a government as leader of the country's largest party, the Rastriya Praja Party. We became the opposition, and since that day we have remained in opposition. Thereafter, I never really met King Tribhuvan. We might have perfunctorily met at parties and other such occasions, but I had no contact and nor was I very bothered.

I began to tour the country. It was during this period that I was beaten up at Tudikhel, as I have said. Hearing of the incident, King Tribhuvan sent over his military secretary, Yog Bikram, and one other person to enquire. Those attacks on me were ferocious as well as vulgar, in editorials, statements and the rantings of insignificant individuals. Thus, the conflict

and struggle continued, and then King Tribhuvan died.

With the king gone, it seemed as if Thuldaju had lost all support. He had tried to go to Switzerland, where the king was undergoing treatment, but Tribhuvan stopped him and called only his eldest son over. That sent us a strong message. Mahendra came back with royal authority before King Tribhuvan had actually passed away. The crown prince came back with the king's prerogatives, and if I remember correctly, immediately upon his arrival and even before his father's passing away, he withdrew two department's from Thuldaju's portfolio.

I had told Thuldaju earlier, "Thuldaju, they will now remove you. To pre-empt that, you must do something strong and dramatic. Build a base for yourself by taking an initiative in land reform or some other area." I had met him secretly, and his reply was, "Are you sure?" Tarini used to stay at Putali Sadak and I was in Bishalnagar. He brought us together as if for a meeting of brothers. I said, "Thuldaju, you will be removed within a few weeks, so you must move to strengthen your base." Before long, however, King Tribhuvan was dead.

After Mahendra ascended the throne, he raised a rather distasteful debate regarding democracy. He said, "They say democracy is here but is still in its infancy. But how is it then that an infant is so crafty, greedy. There is no innocence of a child in this democracy."

I had warned Thuldaju while he was still prime minister that he had better be careful, that they would now move against him as well. He had replied, "Is that what you think? I will meet the king tomorrow and speak to him." Two departments had already been taken away by then. He went to meet the king and said, "Your Majesty, there are rumours about. I will resign if you don't need me, and you can appoint someone else." The king reassured him, saying, "Why, I have complete trust in you. I took those two departments away so as to lighten your load. Besides, those were departments that would only bring you discredit. I have put them into my hands. I will not do anything else, you can continue with your work." Reassured, Thuldaju informed me, "The king will not do anything."

A few days later, even as the cabinet was meeting, news came from the royal palace that Thuldaju had been removed from office. An envelope arrives from Singha Darbar, which he opens, with Mahabir Shumshere and all the others present. He reads the letter and then announces, "I am no longer prime minister. You are no longer ministers. This cabinet is no more." Thuldaju immediately left for home, asking the flag on the car to be sheathed. At his residence, the military guard was already packing up and would not give him the salute. His phone line had been cut and the

electricity disconnected; that is how he was disgraced. He spent the night in darkness and without a phone. As Thuldaju used to say later, "I just don't understand the royal palace."

Thuldaju thus became an unemployed lay-about, and the king began direct rule. We remained an opposition force. Once we realised that there was no hope of setting up a government, we spread out across the country. I travelled all over, barring a few areas in the northern hills of the Far West. Once, King Mahendra said to me, "I have travelled more than you." It turned out that he had indeed travelled quite a bit. I said, "Your Majesty had the resources, whereas I have had to walk."

Ganesh Manji also hit the road, as did the others, and we strengthened our party's base during that period. We already commanded the respect of the population, and we organised conferences of the Central Committee every year—in Biratnagar, Birganj and Nepalganj—and also had conferences at the district level. We maintained our activities, and while continuously opposing the government our focus was centred on peasant rights. Besides land reform, however, we also highlighted foreign policy issues and challenged the government's accountability. We also ceaselessly demanded elections.

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The Central Committee session was coming up in Birganj. I felt I had been president of the party for long enough and decided to withdraw. I suggested to the Working Committee that Subarnaji be the next president. Ganesh Manji, however, said, "It is I who should come after you." I could not place too much reliance on Ganesh Manji in the post. Subarnaji was not someone to go on tour, and as president I could not go out campaigning for him, even though everyone knew I supported him. Ganesh Manji campaigned energetically. Perhaps my own family was divided on this. Girija, for example, may have voted for Ganesh Manji. However, Subarnaji was victorious by a large margin. I think it was during that Birganj session that we adopted the resolution on socialism.

We had two meetings in Birganj as I recall, one at a cinema hall and the other in Subarnaji's compound. A big podium had been prepared there, and the atmosphere was quite festive when we decided to embrace socialism. I was president at that time, and had taken in Rishikesh Shaha as one of the general secretaries. It was a decision for which I faced strong disapproval. I have always tried to promote new faces, but he did not turn

out to be reliable. When he saw an opportunity with the king about to form a government, he immediately resigned and headed off to Kathmandu. He did this even before our session was over. That is what Rishikesh Shaha did in Birganj.

It was in Birganj, as I have said, that we embraced socialism as a guiding principle of the party. We decided to have links with the Socialist International. Our demands at the time were for the fulfilment of King Tribhuvan's pledge to hold elections for a constituent assembly, and for land reform. These were our two main slogans: that land reform be provided to the peasantry and that the monarchy live up to its word. We claimed that, left to us, elections would be held within two months. It was while I was home minister that we had announced holding elections within two years. We complained from the pulpit about the delay in elections and blamed the king for doing this and that.

We strengthened our organisation on the basis of these two demands. We would call a large public meeting wherever we went. Back then, our party workers were more representative of the people than they are today. The party's influence was not limited to the bazaars but penetrated the villages as well. Kathmandu was not under our control—it was the same back then as it is now—but the other places, including Biratnagar, were with us.

During that interval, we improved our party's working and during our travels around the country we were able to significantly refine its character. We also organised a *satyagraha* a couple of times. During this period, peasants engaged in struggles in a few places, such as in Mahottari. In western Nepal, there was a struggle related to land tenure. In Dang and Biratnagar, there were campaigns for the tiller's share of the crop. There were peasants' protests all over, in Kailali-Kanchanpur, Banke, Bardia, and we participated in all. Our people played a pivotal role in those protests, and we had debates on what was fair payment.

Once, we even got involved in a united front. Our party was in touch with Tanka Prasad and Dilli Raman Regmi, whose parties had no people, nothing at all. We had to make their flags for them; our volunteers had to speak on their behalf. When I suggested that we go on a joint tour, they refused, and only Bhadrakali Mishra travelled with me once. He was in Tanka Prasad's party, after having moved around quite a bit. Three of us were arrested in Janakpur where a large rally was being organised. I do not remember which year this was, but it was when we were about to start our *satyagraha*.

There were a couple of points that were being debated at that time,

besides those that came up with reference to Matrika Babu. We opposed the throne, particularly King Mahendra after Tribhuvan's passing, because he was completely against democracy. We were demanding elections and an end to the king's direct rule. That is what we demanded of the royal palace. King Mahendra called a political meeting once, failing to distinguish between the relative strength of the parties. Representatives of 120 or 125 organisations were brought together, including, amazingly, a social service group engaged in cremating unclaimed bodies. We boycotted that meeting, and continued to demand prompt elections.

Tanka Prasad was appointed prime minister. He was staying in Kamal Pokhari at some Rana's, and he invited me one evening for dinner and said, "Bishweshwar Babu, you have to help me. The king wants me to set up as broad-based a government as possible. We will give your party two berths; you have to join and assign one other person." I said, "We will not comply. You will just have to form your own government, and choose those who will be accountable to you. We will demand that you hold elections as soon as possible. This government should have been ours, but the king decided to put his faith in you and the work is cut out for you. We demand only that you organise elections *post haste*." That was that.

One thing that happened during Tanka Prasad's tenure was the establishment of bilateral ties with China. We had nothing to say about that. Once, Tanka Prasad came to me and said, "The Chinese are pressuring us on the matter of Tibet. We had extra-territorial powers in Tibet, the Dalai Lama used to pay a tribute of 10,000 rupees annually, and Nepalis were tried in special Nepali tribunals and not in the Tibetan courts. The Chinese are saying that these unequal arrangements should no longer be maintained. What's your opinion?"

I replied, "Why rush the matter? We have the upper hand right now. Later, when we need a concession from China, we can bargain and get a good deal for the country."

He then confided, "India is also applying pressure on this."

"Still, what's your hurry?"

"There is no hurry, but think about it and give me advice."

I was headed somewhere, and stopped in Delhi on the way. I met Jawaharlalji and told him, "Tanka Prasadji said that he is facing pressure from you on Tibet. Why are you doing this?" To begin with, as socialists, we supported Tibetan independence and believed that China was engaged in aggression. That was the result of our socialist leanings, I think. "Infanticide", Lohia used to call the Chinese action on Tibet.

I told Jawaharlalji, "You have gifted Tibet to the Chinese on a silver platter."

He replied, "So, would you want me to send in the army to place the Dalai Lama back on his throne?"

"There is no need to send in the army. But you have provided international legitimacy and recognition to the takeover of Tibet. You are also asking us to unilaterally let China have what it wants."

Then Jawaharlalji said, "Look, BP, it will be good for Nepal if you show goodwill to such a large country. No amount of pressure from your side will work. If you relinquish your rights as a show of goodwill, they will be beholden to you for that. Your idea of give-and-take will not work with a large country like China. When all is said and done, you will not be able to maintain those rights in any case. China will never pay you the ten thousand-rupee tribute, and it makes no sense for you to make the claim just for the sake of it. Renouncing your rights, on the other hand, will send a positive message to the Chinese."

With this detailed explanation, I came around to accepting Jawaharlalji's argument. Nevertheless, I told Tanka Prasad to arrive at his decision without my help. My own belief had been that if there were some problems on the border demarcation exercise, for example, we could use our historical privileges in Tibet as bargaining chips. However, the government made a unilateral decision. By reporting that discussion, I am also trying to illustrate Jawaharlalji's point-of-view regarding China.

China's Premier Chou En-Lai came to Nepal during Tanka Prasad's tenure, and it was my first meeting with Chou. He was staying at Sheetal Niwas, where we met for three hours, talking generally about India and other matters. At one point, in some context, he referred to a matter as being "between you and India". He implied that we were under the zone of influence of India. I remember being a bit disheartened during that conversation as a result. I was a bit critical of India at that time. He said, "We will not do anything which will make it difficult for India." On the one hand, Jawaharlalji was asking us to accept the reality in Tibet, and on the other here was Chou En-Lai demarcating his arena.

I met Chou En-Lai one more time, at a party, where I remember a nice dialogue. Professor Price, a very good man working with some aid agency who had taken a house near Kamal Pokhari, was present. I introduced him to Chou En-Lai.

The professor said, "Sir, I have lived in Peking for many years."

The premier asked, "In what capacity?"

“I was a professor at Peking University before the communist takeover.”

“Thank you, Mr Price. You have trained good communists, and today they are my trusted colleagues. Thank you, Mr Price.” Chou En-Lai was very good at give-and-take.

Tanka Prasad then came up with something else—he announced that the elections would be for a parliament rather than for a constituent assembly. The argument was that this would bring a parliament into being earlier. We fought against that proposition in court and protested in every way we could. Tanka Prasad was then removed from government. I believed that the king had made him prime minister in order to have him make this announcement and also to do a few other things.

I used to meet King Mahendra every so often, and we would have open disagreements. Once, he called me over and said, “No one doubts your nationalist credentials, nor that you are a democrat. But you do not look out for my interests.”

I said, “There is also no doubt that Your Majesty is a nationalist, and that you are against democracy.”

“Whether I am a democrat or not is something that history will decide. It is not something that can be resolved now.” That was how he responded to me once.

King Mahendra had a guilt complex as regards his father. He told me in private once that while in England, he had met a seance medium, having learnt that he could put you in touch with the dead. The king wanted to have a meeting with his father. As the king told me when alone, “Since it would be embarrassing to make the visit publicly, I went secretly with my military secretary and queen. When we got there, the medium asked, ‘Who do you want to meet?’”

The king replied, “My father.”

The medium asked, “Okay, but are you sure you will not panic?” He then asked if the queen would be scared, and the king asked her, “Do you want to stay?” The queen said she did. However, things felt a little uncomfortable after he closed the door and left the room. “I want to go,” the queen said, and she left the room. After a little while, a ghostly shadow of King Tribhuvan was visible on the window or somewhere else. King Mahendra told me, “I hastily turned towards the shadow. I asked many questions, and discussed matters. I also asked about you.”

I asked the king, “What about me?”

“I will not tell you everything, but I was told that as far as Nepal’s national good was concerned, I could trust you.”

That is what he said his father had told him: "On matters of national interest, my father said I could trust BP."

I responded lightly, "However, you must have been told not to trust me as far as the authority of kings is concerned!"

"I will not tell you more, just this much. I asked about everyone."

That was the level at which we used to converse. I was clear about my disagreement with him, saying, "Your Majesty is not a supporter of democracy."

And, about me, he used to say, "No one doubts your nationalist credentials."

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We were politically active and lobbying for the quick holding of elections. One day, the king called me and said, "I have looked at everyone, and found that they are all useless. If I were to call on you to form a government, would you agree?"

I replied, "It is our legal right to be able to form a government. The only problem has been Your Majesty's refusal to acknowledge this claim. Of course, we would form a government."

"But you have to be prime minister," he said.

I replied, "I will not be the prime minister, because we are bent on elections and I have to be part of the preparations for that. If our government is formed, its main task will be to organise the elections. Your Majesty should make Subarnaji prime minister. That will be good for the government. As party president, I will focus on the party organisation and the election campaign."

After trying to insist, King Mahendra said, "Okay, let it be Subarna Shumshere. However, we must first discuss a couple of matters. The council of ministers must contain some of my people."

"You can discuss that with the person who will be prime minister. It should not be difficult to arrange."

He then also made some other points, to which I also replied, "That's for you to discuss with the prime minister, not with me."

When I said that, he said, "Yes, that's certainly true." The king then consulted a small chit of paper which he retrieved from his coat pocket. It had some very small and fine writing on it, signifying something secretive. There must be some psychology which explains that. Putting it away, he said, "Okay, there is no need then to ask you the other

questions. I will put them to Subarna Shumshere. Please arrange for us to meet tomorrow.”

“If Your Majesty wishes, I will send him over.”

Subarnaji met the king, and I called a meeting of the party. The king sent Subarnaji away, saying, “You will have to form the government on such and such a day. Bring me a list.” We then kept waiting for the call to form the government, for the king had given his word. I was staying at a room in Tarini’s house at Nag Pokhari. At that time, Tarini brought out a newspaper named *Kalpana* or *Diyalo*. A mounted messenger came from the royal palace and handed me a sealed letter. I felt it must be the letter inviting us to come over at a certain date to form the government, and a similar letter must have gone to Subarnaji. Actually, I think Subarnaji was with me at that time, and we may both have been waiting for such a message.

Opening the letter, what we read was this: “Dear Bishweshwar Babu, the other day I said that I would let you form the government. Later, thinking over it, I realised that it would be proper for a large party such as yours to take up the reins of government only after the elections. Being able to welcome you in government at that time would also add respect both to your party and myself. For this reason, I am now making other arrangements. Please understand. Thank you. Yours, Mahendra.”

It was a typed official communication, signed in English. They took that letter away when I was arrested and they searched the premises on the first of Poush. That was a significant letter, which shows how the king went back on his word within a couple of days of our discussion.

A few days before that episode, Indian Ambassador Bhagwan Sahay had been seeking a meeting with me. I had said, “Fine, I will meet him.” The question was where we should meet. The Indian embassy’s cultural attache was a friend of mine named Suman. He called me and a few others to dinner at his house, which was near Kamal Pokhari. He did not say that the Indian ambassador was coming. He merely told me, “A man is waiting to meet you in the other room. Why don’t you go across?” I entered and saw that there were sarees laid out next to a bathroom door. The Indian ambassador was seated there on a chair.

Bhagwan Sahay wanted to know what was transpiring between me and the king, but I was not very cooperative. I told him, “Why should I tell you what discussions I had with the king?” He got angry and said, “You and your friends have hard days coming up. You might be thinking that you will be asked to form a government.” Thus, he had already forewarned me, at night at about nine, and the king’s letter got into my hands the next

morning. He had said, "I have come to warn you. Why don't you take me into your confidence?" And I had replied, "That's all right. Let whoever be prime minister. It will not make a difference to us." He left, saying, "That's all I have come to say." Later, I met him in Delhi when I went over for treatment, and he showed me great regard.

Then K.I. Singh came in as prime minister. We knew that he was an unruly kind of fellow, and the Indian ambassador, too, had warned us that we would face some repression. We knew everything about K.I. Singh.

T.B. Malla was still in jail because he knew everything and, if released, everything would be out. He had had contacts with both King Tribhuvan and King Mahendra. He later died in jail. We tried so hard to get him out but were unsuccessful. He was been caught during the "K.I. Singh affair". He had been trying to pass some information to me, and Sundar Raj Chalise had been jailed with him for a few days. He opened himself completely to Chalise and told him, "Tell all this to BP, he should know everything." I have already referred earlier to Hari Shumshere's selling of the gold plate and so on, all this was information given by Malla, which was later confirmed. He died about that time. I have always wanted to find out his full story. Thuldaju would know about this, as Malla was apprehended during his tenure. Plus, Sundar Raj Chalise also would know.

K.I. Singh became prime minister, but he was a most unreliable person. His government did not last more than three months, and thereafter again the king exercised something like direct rule. We organised *satyagraha* and so on, and again the king began talks with us. Not only with us—he called a conference, of the Gorkha Dal, the parties of Tanka Prasad, mine, K.I. Singh, Regmi, and so on. He would serve us coffee and discuss what was to be done, how it was to be done. We decried the delay and continuously insisted on the earliest possible holding of elections. That was what interested us more, than going into government. The first statement at that conference was made by Ranadhir Subba, whose was a biased voice. He knew that he would not be inducted into the government, so he made his statement and boycotted the conference. K.I. Singh also said that the three groups represented could not form the government. I think Bhadrakali Mishra was representing Tanka Prasad. And there were Regmi and I present.

After a few days, the king said, "I have decided that I myself will chair a council of ministers, and Subarna will join it as vice-chairman representing the Congress."

We said, "That is okay, but elections should be the cabinet's main focus."

And so it was agreed, but then the king made Subarnaji chairman rather than vice-chairman. He also brought people from other parties into the cabinet. Dilli Raman Regmi himself joined the council of ministers. With Subarnaji there, the matter of elections was, of course, confirmed.

Before this, King Mahendra had called a conference at the royal palace to discuss the elections. It was held at a meeting hall there, with some police and security people also present. I insisted that all preparations for elections were in place, and it could be done within six months. That discussion was broadcast over the radio. The king said, "That is what Bishweshwar Babu says, but the Election Commissioner has something quite different to say." That was heard over the air, too.

I said, "If we are suddenly confronted with war, will we be able to say we are not ready and postpone it by a couple of years? Why can't we organise an election in six months if we do it on a war footing? This matter is absolutely critical."

Khadga Man Singh—not today's Khadga Bahadur Singh—attacked me strongly after that. The king then suggested, "Bishweshwar Babu had better have a talk with the election commissioner." Subarna Shumshere was the election commissioner then. I took him to another room, and that meeting was dissolved. I asked Subarnaji, "Will you be able to organise elections within six months?" He replied, "Why not, if I get the cooperation of everyone." He would say this to me, but not in front of the king.

After that conference, Subarnaji was asked to form the government. After it was formed, we immediately began preparing for the polls. As far as the nature of the elections was concerned, we had consented that it would be for a parliament.

Then we had to decide who was to write the constitution. I relaxed when it was suggested that Sir Ivor Jennings would draft the constitution. I told the king that the person who had drafted Ceylon's constitution would surely not give us a document that would help finish off democratic rights. I told the king, "I will accept the constitution if he drafts it."

The king then formed a constitution drafting committee, with Surya Prasad, Hora Prasad and others on it. But the royal palace rejected the draft handed in by Ivor Jennings. He gave them another draft, which too was cast aside, the argument being that it gave too much power to the legislature. An exasperated Jennings submitted a third draft and said, "I will not submit another draft. I am leaving."

That is how the last draft was prepared. Even today, I feel that the constitution given by Ivor Jennings is a peculiar document. It has protected the king's powers and at the same time maintained the legislature's

authority. The expectation it holds is that the king will act responsibly; only then would the constitution work. That is how that document reached for a balance. Truly, a constitutional monarchy rests less on what is written and more on how much responsibility is exhibited by the king and the prime minister. Ganesh Manji pointed out the flaws in the document, but I thought it was workable.

The document drafted by Ivor Jennings was then approved. The elections were held, and we won.

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A crisis overtook us, from two directions: one, the royal palace and the other, India. The elections were over, and it was clear that I would be prime minister. But the king just would not call us to form the government, which was most intriguing.

The selection of our party candidates to field in the elections was the responsibility of a parliamentary committee, but it was mostly my call. None of the others, not even Subarnaji, knew who was to be fielded where. Also, as the main campaigner in that election, I had the ability to help people get elected.

There are interesting things about some of the constituencies, which showed the nationalist spirit of my party colleagues. There seems to be a great difference between party workers then and now. Today, they all seem to think for themselves. One experience was from Saroj Koirala's constituency, where they were discussing who to select as candidate. I called a meeting of party workers at Saroj's house. There were about 50 to 60 workers from all over the district, and Ram Narayan Mishra was also there. I asked the gathering, "Who should receive the ticket to run?"

The feudals put forward an influential Rajput candidate in that district. The Giri family and Ram Narayan's family both backed that candidate rather than Tulsi Giri or Ram Narayan. All the feudals were rallying behind this candidate, who emerged very powerful indeed. Ram Narayan said, "We must back a Tarai person, because the opposition is very strong." Immediately, the matter of *gwalas*, or Yadavs, came up. I noted that the Yadavs formed a majority in the district. We were discussing the matter when one Nirgun Yadav, a very active friend of ours, spoke up, saying, "Saroj Babu should receive the ticket."

If Saroj had not got the ticket, it would have gone to Nirgun himself. But he said, "Saroj Babu should get the ticket because he is the one who

has trained us all. If we were to get the ticket on the basis of community, why did we need the Nepali Congress?" Nirgun has now joined the Group of 38. Another person, a Jha, arose and said, "Saroj Babu should get the ticket." He was not a very well-to-do person, and when I later enquired about him I learnt that he had had a hard life.

Ram Narayan continued to object, saying, "We are bound to lose." Then another Yadav, one who was with us but not that active—he had a stutter—said, "I will stand." But I thought that this could also be a test case, and Saroj should get the ticket. I addressed the gathering, "I have made my decision. I feel that Saroj should be our candidate. This will not be unfair, and I believe that Saroj will win. This will also manifest our party's national character." Ram Narayan said till the end that the decision was a big mistake, that we would definitely lose in a district where we could have easily won. In the end, however, we were victorious there.

We faced a challenge in Bhadrakali Mishra's electoral district, where I had to make sure he lost. In fact, I wanted to beat him while fielding a weak candidate. I held a meeting of party workers there, in Jaleswar. There was a Rajput there, our district chairman, who was well known and capable. He later died of cancer. I said we should give a ticket to someone from a slightly lower class background. That man, a Singh, was not ready to battle Bhadrakali and neither were the others. It was quite difficult for anyone to beat Bhadrakali there. There was someone there, dark-complexioned and quite unprepossessing, and I pointed to him and suggested that he be our candidate. I asked him, "Can you fight?"

"Why not? I will fight. But you have to come once and campaign," he said. I assured him that I would come. "Then it is okay, you can give me the ticket." His candidature was confirmed.

It was around that time that I went to Siraha, where Bedananda Jha had stood. He was president of the Tarai Congress. His brother or someone close was the editor of *Aryabarta* in Patna, and so he received a lot of publicity. In Siraha, our workers met in a small room to discuss who to offer the Nepali Congress ticket to. There, too, the suggestion was to put up a *madhisay* plainsman as candidate if we did not want to lose the seat. I did not like this kind of talk, and placed my views before the meeting. A *madhisay* got up there, he was a Jha, and said, "Why are we distinguishing between *madhisay* and *pahadiya*? If we had to vote just for a *madhisay*, then there is Bedananda's party. Why should I come to your party? He is a *madhisay*, and he is saying that *madhisays* have become second-class citizens in the country. But this is hardly the principle according to which election tickets should be distributed."

Do you find anyone saying something like that today? I, too, used to like that point of view, for we had already seen the negative trends of communal relations in India. So I said, "We should just give the ticket to Mitra Lal Giri." He was the party chairman of the area, but he was unwilling to run, convinced that he would lose. He said, "You can choose somebody else; I will always be there to help."

Tulsi Giri, who was there, also said that we should not choose a *pahadiya*. However, I insisted, "In this constituency, we must give a ticket to a *pahadiya*." The problem was that there was no *pahadiya* available, but then I saw Madhav Regmi sitting in a corner. He owned all of three *bighas* of land, and nothing else. I said, "Will you all help if Madhav Regmi gets the ticket?" Mitra Lal said, "If you give him the ticket, of course we will support him." Tulsi Giri was opposed, but all the other workers said, "We will support him." I made him our candidate.

There were two electoral districts there, and Dev Narayan Yadav was given a ticket in the other district. He told me, "As long as you promise to come over once to campaign, I will take care that he wins." As I emerged after assigning the ticket to Madhav Regmi, a group of Jhas were gathered outside, looking a bit like goondas. One of them spoke up, rather roughly, "We have to have a word with you."

I said, "Go ahead."

"No. We have to sit down and talk at length."

"Okay."

There was a primary school shanty nearby, and school was off. There were a few benches inside, the roof leaked, and the floor was wet. We went in there, and I turned to them and said, "Okay, what is it?"

One of them said, loudly and threateningly, "You have given a ticket to a *pahadiya*, and he is fighting our leader! We will not tolerate this abuse by hill people. Your candidate shall lose his deposit!" They did not get violent, but they did act a bit like goondas, trying to frighten me.

I said, "I took everything into consideration when I made the decision. Our effort will be to try and defeat Bedananda Jha, and yours will be to try and defeat Madhav Regmi. We have already put forward Regmi, so there is no sense in this debate. You can proceed with your campaign, and we will with ours."

These few incidents during the candidate selection process, I believe, are worth recalling. In all three of these districts, our candidates won and the opposition, including Bhadrakali Mishra, lost.

There was a similar incident in the Limbu area. I set out from Biratnagar assigning tickets, taking a day to go on horseback from Madhumalla to a

place called Ravi. Many Limbus were gathered there, striking poses and making sarcastic comments. I brought the party workers together to decide on the ticket allocation and to agree on procedures. Premraj Angdambe was there, and there was of course the possibility of giving him the ticket. Premraj's father used to say that in that sector a Limbu should get the ticket. I did not like the very notion that a Limbu should necessarily get a ticket in Limbuan, for this would mean that all tickets would have to be assigned according to the local community.

I did not even know Ganesh Rijal. I was introduced to him right there. His house was a mile from where we were, and he had opened a school. I stayed there. Seeing him, I thought he would be the right candidate, but I had not known him earlier. There was a Limbu lad who would walk together with my horse. I said, "Listen, they say that only a Limbu can win in this area. What do you think?" You know the kind of young party worker who likes to carry a flag and stand close by a leader? He was that kind of young worker.

He replied, "Why should that be so? Should only a Limbu win? Aren't we Limbus?"

I asked, "What will happen if Rijal is given the ticket?"

"Whoever you may choose, I know it will not be me. Our job is to work to make the candidate win. We will work for whoever you give a ticket to."

I said, "But the Minister says we should not give him the ticket." Premraj's father had been a minister.

He replied, "The Minister is a great exploiter. We will not agree to anything just because he says so."

Here was a young lad of 15 or 16, walking by my side with a flag in hand, and my ideas coincided with his. I gave the ticket to Ganesh Rijal and he went on to win with a good majority. The Limbu who opposed him lost. However, in another sector I gave the ticket to a Limbu.

Having assigned the ticket to Ganesh Rijal, I came down and continued with my tour, towards Premraj Angdambe's area. His father's house was on the way, and I halted in front and called out, "Is anyone in?" It was clear that the gentleman was very angry. He knew that I was coming, and had gathered all the Bahuns and Chhetris in his courtyard and was lecturing them. He wanted me to see that. I reined my horse outside and called out, "Is anyone in?"

"Hey *bajey*, go see who is outside," he instructed someone, who reported, "Koiralaji has come."

"Oh, do go and lay a rug for him to sit on," he shouted from the inside. However, he did not emerge. I dismounted and went in, and saw that he

had gathered everyone there. He was seated on a rug on the porch, and repeated, "Somebody, please bring a rug for him."

"I do not have time to sit. I have to reach Phidim. I will be gone."

"You have given a ticket to Rijal. Not only have you been unjust, you are also bound to lose. Having come to Limbuan, what is this you have done?"

"The elections will provide the answer," I replied.

Having said that, I mounted my horse and departed. He had been waiting there for me. As soon as I left, he had his horse saddled with much ceremony, as if he were a big leader. He followed me, and I could see him waving his whip, but I pushed ahead. I had only a couple of companions with me, with whom I made it to Phidim. There, too, we won the elections.

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Now let us talk about my own constituency. I had given word to so many villages that I would come, as we would have to win solely on the basis of my campaigning. This was why I had to visit numerous constituencies, and why I had not been able to spend much time in my own other than a couple of days every so often. Once, however, I took a jeep and travelled the entire district, going to every village. We would stop the jeep, speak to the people for a while, and be off.

The front opposing me in my district was made up of those with *madhisay* feelings, the communists and Thuldaju. That was when I got to see how the communists campaign. Many communists had come up from Benaras. Our slogan was always, "*Jindabad! Jindabad!*" They, on the other hand, would move around in a crowded truck, shouting, "Down with! Down with!" They would raise their fists, look fearful with their eyes and mouths distorted, and shout the slogan, "Murderer! Murderer! B.P. Koirala!" Thuldaju's son Kamal and others would also be riding in the truck. Shailendra and others also campaigned like that. Their entire effort was to defeat me, and they did not hesitate at provoking *madhisay* ill-will to try and achieve that end.

Meanwhile, the king was supporting Saneybabu, Dil Bahadur Shrestha. That was a clever ploy to divide up the vote of the *pahadiyas*. Saneybabu was like the raja there and had kept the people cowed down with fear. I was not able to hold meetings in his area, as he would not allow it. I then decided that we must hold a meeting come what may. That

was our first, and probably our last, meeting in that area. All our colleagues were scared of him. After we had successfully organised the meeting, Saneybabu invited me for a meal. He said, "I did not even know that you had come. Had I known, I would have had you as a guest in my house."

King Mahendra was helping Saneybabu. The king tried strenuously to defeat me and also to defeat the other candidates fielded by our party. He had provided financial support to Ranganath's party. His wife Duti, Sushil's elder sister, had come to tell me, "I do not know what has come over him, please talk to him."

I replied, "But how can I? He will not come to me."

"I will call you for a meal, please come."

And so, I met him using that excuse of a meal. Referring to the party that he had established, I asked Ranganath, "Why are you doing this? Where did you get the money?"

Duti had already told me where he had got his money from. I said, "What's happening to you? It is okay for you to fight in a couple of constituencies, but how can you hope to fight elections all over the country?"

After our party, his was the party fielding the largest number of candidates all over the country, and it was the king who made him do that. The king tried his level best to have me defeated, and the plan was that the *pahadiya* votes would be shared by Dil Bahadur Shrestha and the *mudhisay* votes by Dr Avadh Narayan.

The leftists were also part of that effort, and they all tried to isolate me. In Biratnagar, I went house to house, saying, "I will campaign door-to-door, starting in the morning and by evening I will be elsewhere." I did not really know how things were going for me, but I did feel that it would be hard for them to beat me. But I was also a bit frightened by the atmosphere in the bazaars. They were not with me. Thuldaju was in our own party, and he could have got some votes from the Marwaris for me. However, he left the town, not wanting to get himself involved in this complication.

Thuldaju went and stayed instead in Farbesganj, after first instructing the people in his household to vote for Dr Avadh Narayan. How I know this has to do with the fact that his voting symbol was a clock. Grandmother had gone to cast her ballot on election day, and Indira and others were also there standing in line. Indira asked her, "Grandmother, who are you voting for?" The old lady pointed to a slip of paper that had Dr Avadh Narayan's clock symbol printed on it. She said, "Here, this is who Babu has asked me to vote for." When Indira protested that that was the wrong

symbol, grandmother insisted, "No, this is what Babu told me."

I won by a margin of five or six thousand, which was not at all bad, given the circumstances. However, I had hoped to win by a larger margin. We had lesser voters because my possible support was divided up in that manner.

After the election victory, I was confronted with two problems. No one had expected us to win. The king always used to ask me, "Tell me, how many places do you expect to win?" I would reply, "If we are able to gather resources, then we will win 70-80 seats, if not we will win in 40-50 places." Everyone expected us to emerge as the largest party in parliament, but not that we would achieve a majority. Indeed, it was on that very assumption that the king had called elections. If we got only 30 seats, he would be free to manipulate. However, we brought in more than an absolute majority.

The king was obviously taken aback by the poll results. And then, he was taking his time calling on me to form the government long after the entire election exercise was over. Bunker was the American ambassador based in Delhi. He came over to my house, to that dirty place, and asked, "What's happening? Why hasn't the king called you?" During that time, I remember, Bunker took me around in his airplane, and he took pictures that I still have.

It was important for me to try to meet the king, and also to establish contact with Jawaharlalji. I believed that the whole experiment would fail if we did not have the support of the two. Jawaharlalji was about to come to the inauguration of the Kosi Barrage. I sent him a letter in the hands of Devendra, who was probably a member of parliament at the time. Jawaharlalji met Devendra and read the letter, probably in the airport waiting room. He then said, "We do not want to speak for anyone. We will be happy with whoever the Congress chooses as its leader in parliament, and will support that person. We do not prefer anyone in particular, so please tell Koiralaji that he should not worry about our stance."

It was already a month and a half since the elections had ended, and the king was still to make a move. Our people had come in from all over the districts in order to choose their leader in parliament, and it was obvious that it would not do to choose an individual unacceptable to the king. It was for that reason that I had not proceeded with the election of our party's parliamentary leader.

Finally, I received an audience with the king and told him, "Your Majesty, what is this? It has been so long since the elections. You should have called on me to form the government as soon as the results were

announced. I suspect you do not relish the idea of me as prime minister. The constitution we have is a very balanced document, which calls for the king and prime minister to work together. If a prime minister that Your Majesty dislikes is foisted upon you, then it will not work. Therefore, I will have the person you prefer elected as leader of our parliamentary committee. Our people are waiting. If you like Subarna Shumshere, then it will be him."

The king replied, "I have worked with Subarna Shumshere for more than a year. He is a bit sluggish. I am a dynamic person, and you are also dynamic, so I am keen to work with you. For that reason, you are acceptable to me. I have already tried out Subarna Shumshere. The rumours in the alleys are all false. I would like to see you as prime minister, but it will have to be a decision of your party." That was the king's reply, and later he called on me to form the government. I have already described the contact I had with India, with Jawaharlalji. All that remained now was to hold a formal election within the party, which was conducted easily enough.

Truth be told, I was in two minds about becoming prime minister. I was not that keen, and wished that Subarnaji could have been given the responsibility. The party people said that the four of us—B.P. Koirala, Subarnaji, Ganesh Manji and Surya Prasad—had to sit down and take the decision. My choice was Subarnaji, but the logic Subarnaji presented was this: "Whoever becomes prime minister now has to handle not only the palace but also the parliament. None of us can do this but you. We are each of us capable of handling the royal palace but our leader now has to be accepted by parliament. You are the only one who fulfils that criteria." I remember clearly Subarnaji saying that. After that, there was nothing remaining to be said, and I was elected.

I believe the king never imagined we would come in with such a overwhelming majority. He was also fearful that we might extend our control over the military. He had therefore, during the interim period after the elections, promulgated a Military Act that was most unnatural and kept the military outside the purview of the parliament's control. I think it was for all these reasons that the king took his time in calling us to form the government.

The military was not a priority for us, however, for the question of toppling the regime was moot. Besides, not constitutional stricture could stop such an action if it happened. I, therefore, did not think much of this matter, but it was a major point as far as the king was concerned. He, therefore, called on me to form the government only after the royal seal

was firmly on that Military Act. From this, one can understand the king's thinking.

Once King Mahendra requested us to form the government, there was a grand event and I spoke over the radio immediately afterwards. It was a message to the nation, and that is another of the speeches I have given that I feel is worth studying. There must be a copy of it somewhere. In it, I outlined the goals of our government.

We then set about forming the council of ministers, which also yielded some significant moments. One had to do with Surya Prasadji. He had run from two constituencies, one in Kathmandu Valley and the other in East No 1, Ramechhap. He had expected to win with a large margin in both places. During my election tour I had said I would campaign in his districts as well, but he had said, "No, there is no need. You concentrate on the villages, I will manage."

"But I am in Kathmandu and could easily go over to your constituency in the Valley," I suggested, to which he finally agreed. He asked me to go address a rally, but when I did go over I was aghast. There was no audience, it was a fiasco. All the paraphernalia was in place, banners and garlands, but not a soul was present. Large loudspeakers had been lugged over. Back then we did not have small portable systems and you had to carry large loudspeakers and heavy batteries over the fields into the outskirts. However, in the end, for all the effort there was no one to listen to the speeches at the rally.

"This is unacceptable!" I shouted at Surya Babu's campaigners, including Sundar Raj Chalise. As I emerged angrily from the rally ground, I saw two people warming themselves in the sun outside. They said, "But we have come to listen to you; you cannot go without making a speech." It turned out that they were of the opposition. They were sunning themselves, that too at quite a distance from the rally point. "We read your election pamphlets. You have to give a speech even if it is just to the two of us."

Getting back, I told Surya Prasadji, "This constituency of yours is not doing well. You must make a little effort, for it is not doing well at all. I will now have to go to your Ramechhap District." But he did not let me go there, believing that the constituency would be tainted if I went. There is the presumption that Surya Babu is a wise and clever man, but there is no basis for this in my experience. He just does not understand people, and otherwise, too, he is inept. He has plenty of money, but that is another matter. During the campaign, he chose the wrong associates, and even the votes that would have come to us, I feel, were diverted. He refused to let me

go to his district because I think he had been warned that my going there would make things even worse.

I had reached Sarlahi during the course of the election campaign and had a speech to give, probably in Gaushala. I arrived by jeep at about 4 pm, and there was a tea party soon after. I was to address a rally in the bazaar's chowk and the crowd had already gathered. A man came running and informed us that Surya Babu was there, and was staying at a house near the bazaar. "So, why don't you go and call him over?" I suggested. "We are having a public meeting; ask him to come." The man went over and returned to say that Surya Babu was refusing to come. "Are you sure it is Surya Babu?"

I could not believe that Surya Babu was there. It had already been announced that he had lost in his bid for parliament. I had the meeting to address and was to leave that same evening, but I still wanted to meet him. So I told my colleagues, "Let's go see him." It was already seven in the evening when we got to the house. Gopal came running down the stairs, but Surya Babu stayed in his room. There was a difficult staircase leading upstairs, and it was dark, with no light. Gopal began fixing a wick lamp. I told the others to remain in the landing and took the stairs. There was a camp cot there, and I sat on it. Surya Babu was sitting on the ground on a rug which I think he used on his horse as well. I asked him, "You were right here, and I had called for you. Why didn't you come?"

"How could I show my face?" he asked. Gopal brought a light and Surya Babu asked him to leave. Surya Babu's face was quite dark, I noticed. "This is politics. You should not be downcast just because you lost," I said.

He said, "You should let me go. I am not capable of showing myself anywhere now. I did not know you had planned a meeting here. I came this way because I wanted to go secretly to Ramnagar. I will stay there and do something or the other and try and forget this shame. I dare not return to show my face." I was seated on that camp cot. Holding my knees, he started shedding copious tears.

I said, "You can hardly engage in politics exhibiting such weakness. Just because a man loses one election does not mean he will always lose. You have some background and have played a role. Come with me; I will help you. Even if you did not attend this one meeting, there are many others for you to attend."

"Please don't insist. I will stick out like an inauspicious presence, like an ill omen. No candidate will want me at his meeting. You must allow me to leave for some time."

I said, "That's not the way. I will make space for you. I will make you something or the other. Don't lose heart."

After reassuring him thus, I departed. My entire schedule had been affected by that meeting, and I stayed with him for an hour and a half or so. We were to reach a candidate's house that night, and got there with difficulty in the darkness. Later, when the cabinet was about to be formed, I had Surya Babu nominated into the parliament's upper house, the Mahasabha. This allowed him to join the council of ministers, and that was how I brought him into the cabinet.

People should have remembered this. Surya Babu himself should have remembered it. Everyone used to tell me, "He is finished. Let him go." My colleagues used to say, "He was a good-for-nothing. Now he is done for." But I remember having consoled him when he was weeping. It may not have been politically astute on my part, but it was certainly a humanitarian gesture. I told my friends, "No, I have assured him. This much we must do for him."

45

I went to meet King Mahendra to discuss the members he was nominating to the upper house. He maintained that it was his prerogative to nominate whomever he wanted, but I said, "Your Majesty, you are not free to make your own decision. In truth, going by the constitution's spirit, your actions must be guided by the prime minister's advice. That is why I have come, to provide advice and support. Your Majesty cannot say I like this person, and I will keep him. Please establish some principles for nominating individuals to the Mahasabha. For example, someone may have contributed in the field of education who may also be able to make a mark in politics; someone who cannot succeed in the tumult of politics but who can contribute a great deal otherwise; some woman member; representatives of some backward classes who find it difficult to get elected but who need to be brought forward; or some former prime ministers who may have lost elections but whose experience would mean a lot. The nominations cannot be solely on Your Majesty's discretion, they must be based on the prime minister's advice."

This was my view on the matter, and I added, "Even if we accept that the discretion lies solely with you, it must be based on some set principles." The king accepted that point, and said, "Okay, that's what we will do." He asked me to suggest some names on that basis. Among former prime

ministers, I suggested Matrika Prasad Koirala and Tanka Prasad Acharya. From the business community, I put up the name of Maniharsha Jyoti. By and large, the king accepted my suggestions. He did not accept Mangalaji, but did put in another. He also agreed to select Matrika Babu.

However, the king did something unexpected and not according to my suggestion: he nominated Saneybabu, my opponent from the Biratnagar constituency. Even outside observers could not stomach that. Foreign ambassadors said to me, "This was most inappropriate from the king's side. It was not correct to nominate someone solely because he had opposed you, and who has no other forte or contribution." I replied, "This king has done what he has done. I do not wish to comment on it." However, I did protest to the king, for that nomination showed his narrow-mindedness. Besides, Saneybabu emerged as a negative presence in parliament, where he would raise needless obstacles. Sometimes he would say that he was sick and could not stand up as he spoke. He would rant and rave.

In any case, the Mahasabha was established, and there remained the matter of setting up the council of ministers. I will say a few things relating to our friends in that context. It was significant that the entire exercise was left in my hands although it was, of course, the prerogative of the prime minister. This was not merely a formal responsibility, however, and my colleagues had come together to give me the task. I used to discuss with others as well, but most of my consultations were with Subamaji, there is no doubt about that.

Incidentally, there are a few things that I forgot to mention about the elections. When it came time to assign tickets, I had planned not to give them to Biswabandhu, Tulsi Giri or Girija. This would make them become more active in the party organisation, I thought, which would make them ready for another struggle if the need arose. This was why I had told them, "You should not run in the elections." Tulsi Giri had no interest in the polls, nor would he have won. He gladly accepted my suggestion, and Girija, too, did as soon as I told him. But Biswabandhu refused to go along, saying, "There will be no other struggle. This is the struggle, and I have to get a ticket."

I then challenged him, "Make a constituency for yourself in Gorkha."

He argued, "No, I have built a house in Chitwan, I will fight from there." In Chitwan, we had Bakhani Singh, our long-time member. (What I am trying to do here is to indicate Biswabandhu's background, his over-arching ambition.) One day, Biswabandhu came to me—it is also my weakness, let us say—and said, "The tickets are to be distributed till the day after tomorrow. If you do not give me a ticket, then I will go and speak

to the king. I have made contact through Bhupalman Singh."

He was staying in my own house, sharing a room with Tulsi Giri. The latter told me, "You should give him a ticket." I replied, "How would I explain it to Bakhan Singh, whose son died?"

That man Biswabandhu has overweening ambition. He is selfishly ambitious and has no qualms whatsoever. I felt that that was very base. I then called Bakhan Singh, who had a lot of supporters. They came with him, for everyone knew that Biswabandhu was eyeing Bakhan Singh's constituency. I told him the problem I was facing and asked him what I should do.

"Whatever the leader orders, I will carry out. But the claim is mine."

I said, "That I understand."

He said, "I may be unhappy if I do not get a ticket, but I will not go against the party or its leader."

I said, "I will keep you in the Mahasabha. Please leave your constituency for a young man."

Bakhan Singh agreed, but our friends from the area were quite angry with me for that decision. Those angered included a party worker named Maiya Devi and others, and Bakhan Singh himself had to mollify them, saying, "Let it be. The leader has decided. Since we have given him the responsibility, we have to agree with what he decides." He was very gracious, and that was how Biswabandhu got his ticket. He came away victorious, and I did manage to get Bakhan Singh appointed to the Mahasabha.

As if that was not enough, Biswabandhu then began demanding that I make him a minister. I was not about to do that under any circumstance, for I felt there was no end to the demands he could make. He has this characteristic, once he wants something he will not let you have any peace and keep pressuring. He was also strenuously lobbying with Subarnaji to be made a minister. "No, I will not agree to that," I said.

"Biswabandhu is somewhat popular with the people and he works hard," someone said, but this was going to extremes. So I replied, "I will not take him in the cabinet. At the most, I could make him the chief whip of the parliamentary party."

Then there was the matter of Kashinath Gautam. He was extremely anxious to become a minister, but I believed that Sri Bhadra Sharma was much more capable. However, Kashinath was very popular in his area and had been responsible for Subarnaji's victory in a constituency sight unseen. Kashinath had that going for him, but I did not find him an attractive personality or character. He actually started saying, "If you do

not make me a minister, I will commit suicide; I will go to Benaras. What will the people think of me? They will say that you used to boast so much, but your leaders do not trust you. So, I will not go home from here. I will go and drown myself in the Ganga. Make me a minister, even if it is just for a few months, so I can show the people. Later, I will retire by myself."

I called Sri Bhadra in. There were three contenders from western Nepal, Sri Bhadra Sharma, Srikanta and Kashinath Gautam. Among them, I felt that Sri Bhadra Sharma was the most capable, and even today I feel that he is good in terms of ability. I said to him, "This is what he says. He promises to resign later." Sri Bhadra replied, "I will not object, whatever your decision." It turned out that Kashinath was saying the same thing to Subarnaji, Ganesh Manji and others, which they shared with me. I made Kashinath a minister.

Other than these two, I faced no difficulty in forming the council of ministers. Everyone accepted my proposals, although of course some of the ministers turned out to be good and others deficient. However, I did try my best to formulate a good cabinet. I was not so keen on the post of prime minister, and it was strange that this was regarded unnatural. People would just not believe me. That was what I experienced.

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Our cabinet started its work. We began with a lot of energy, and with our arrival there was a new enthusiasm in the secretariat, a fresh and unusual environment was created. I gave the government secretaries a lot of leeway in making decisions and instructed them not to refer everything to the ministers. I held the portfolios of defence and general administration, and I directed my officers to use the authority their positions gave them. If anything had to be sanctioned, they should send me a referral with their suggestion. If I disagreed, I would cancel their referral; otherwise, their decisions would stand.

Krishna Prasad Ghimire was the only officer I found cunning. He was the secretary of law, and Surya Babu was looking after the Legal Department. Ghimire would always present two points of view on any legal issue, and tell me, "I will fashion a decision according to what you choose." He was too clever by half, but he was very able when it came to legal issues.

The other secretaries were all men of great integrity and they used to take pride in working with us. They showed great respect for me and if

they faced some obstacle, they would come to me, even when it had to do with another department. I had asked them to tell their ministers to get in touch with me if they faced any problem. I would go and listen to their problems, and sometimes I would walk straight into their offices unannounced. For example, Ram Narayan Mishra would be sitting at his desk studying some file, and I would suddenly turn up. "What file are you looking at?" I would ask. In this manner, I was able to develop some camaraderie in the government. We were also able to make quite an impact internationally, but that is something for the historians to say, rather than me.

Meanwhile, I was facing some challenges during that period. The king had mixed feelings of love and hate towards me, I think. I will take some time to explain my relationship with the king. He definitely became concerned upon seeing the extent of my popularity among the people, how I worked as prime minister, and the very momentum of events. But that was also at a time when he began to speak in praise of me. He had to completely revise what might have been his preconception, that here was a man just like all the rest who had gone before. The king was impressed when he saw my work ethic, by the debates I used to have with him, the discussions we used to have in trying to establish some principles of governance, and my ambitions. My plans and ambitions, which I used to share with him, are the same ones I speak of these days in public during rallies.

Once, the king asked me to explain my aspirations. I told him they were to provide a standard of middle class living, such as that of my family as a minimum for all the people. "How long will that take?" he asked, and I replied that it would require me to win elections three times, and that I would work towards that. I used to bring all kinds of matters before the king so that he would not nurse a grudge. However, whenever he addressed some public meeting, the king invariably said something hurtful against our council of ministers. I would then have to respond. In public, he would show himself to be in opposition to me, but in person he would try to make up for the damage.

He took me on a tour, and I accompanied him even though it was not necessary for the prime minister to go along. No minister was required to go, but I went. During our travels, he was able to observe our party's popularity. Meanwhile, I saw the distaste of the people around the king for what was happening—the secretaries and military officers such as Sher Bahadur Malla. I once saw Sher Bahadur Malla fling away the flag of the Nepali Congress. Truth be told, only the Nepali Congress flag used

to be seen during the tour. There was of course no question of waving the national flag in welcome, and so everywhere it was the Nepali Congress flag. You could see that Sher Bahadur Malla was greatly irritated by this, and as I said once he actually flung our flag away. "What are you doing, Mallaji?" I asked him.

"I was only worried that the flag might poke His Majesty, or it might poke you all."

I said, "But those boys are sitting so far away, how will we be poked?"

Of course, the king was personally popular. Wherever he went, the public would come to watch the pomp and festivity. There would be film showings in the evenings, and the people would come for that as well. There would not be many politically inclined people present, and I thought the king would not have liked that. However, the king also developed some empathy for me during that period, and he did understand that he was not dealing with a charlatan.

I used to discuss anything and everything with him, and he used to feel uncomfortable when an opponent of mine came to him for an audience. I would tell him, "Your Majesty must give them time through your private secretaries. You must meet whoever seeks an audience in the camp." He then started to meet all kinds of people. The people from the military and the Intelligence Department would go with the king during these trips, and they would be investigating and reporting as to who my opponents were and where they were. I knew all that, of course. I toured with the king for all of 15-20 days, all the way from here till Dang.

The king also showed me courtesies. I had to leave the tour in Dang and return to Kathmandu in order to make preparations for an official visit to India. I asked Tulsī Giri to accompany the tour from Dang onwards. It was at that time that Giri established relationships with the king and people in the military like Daan Gambhir Rayamajhi. I remember that well. So, I was to leave the next day, and the airplane had already arrived at Tulsipur, Dang. The airport was some distance from where we were camped, and the king arranged for me to have a meal with him that evening. We used to have our lunch separately, but in the evenings we used to gather together for drinks and so on. The king ate late, but he knew that I had my dinner early. He called me that day and said, "You are leaving tomorrow; let's have some fun today."

During the programme, he announced, "Okay, everyone recite some poem or the other." Now, I could not recollect any poem, but then remembered a short one by Shelly, and I recited it. The poet addresses a lover:

*We look before a laughter
And praying for what is not;
Our finest poems are those
That are made of saddest thought.*

I then remembered a poem from my school days, and recited that one too:

I vow to thee my country...

I recited what I remembered, and the king then said, "Shall I recite one too?" The poem he recited was beautiful and full of emotion. I still remember some sections:

*As you leave us
And visit their big cities
You may even delight in them.
But we will tarry by these rivers, caves and chautaris
And remember you.
Don't you forget us,
For we cannot forget you.
As I wipe the sweat from my brow
In the chautari, tired,
Then I will think of you.*

It was a beautiful poem, and it was addressed to me. Obviously, he would not have expressed such emotions if he had not liked me. We then had dinner, and Tulsi Giri came to me and said, "You should also have read out a poem similarly emotional. I told him to stop that kind of talk.

I did not know how these things worked. There was a bit of drama in how I was summoned to recite a poem. If alerted, I would also have prepared a poem, but everything was controlled by the king. And it had seemed to me that he had recited the poem extemporaneously.

From all this, looking back, I do think that ours was a love-hate relationship.

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I remember some aspects of my relationship with King Mahendra. Whatever his public countenance, he always showed me great personal courtesy. When I visited him at the palace, with pride he would introduce his sons and daughters, when they were home from school in Darjeeling. And the queen was like a family friend. Sushila would not be able to go often because of Chetana, who used to fall ill time and again. They would

complain when they did not see her, "Where is Sushilaji, why didn't you bring her?" When Sushila did come along, the queen would say, "What's this? The sun rising from the west!"

The king had purposefully maintained a personal relationship, and I can relate a couple of events to illustrate this. I think it was one of those meetings when his children were home. The king called me on the telephone and said, "There is a party at my place today. It is a family affair, and I have not called anyone else. Please come, and do bring your wife." Then a call came from the queen, "Please invite Sushilaji on my behalf."

I told Sushila, "Today, you too have to go, okay?" She disliked attending banquets and grand parties. Because Chetana was okay that day, and there was help, we decided to go. It was the hot season, and the party was organised on the roof. Sher Bahadur Malla came down to receive us and escorted us up. It was only family, seated there all around on couches. As we came up, with Sushila leading the way, the king and queen could be seen whispering to each other and grinning. I went up and greeted them.

"So, why did your majesties smile as we entered?" I asked.

The king turned to the queen and said, "You tell him why."

She responded, "No, Your Majesty, you tell him!"

Then king then said, "We were saying, as soon as we saw you, that this is the man who can be prime minister of Nepal and maintain our respect internationally as well. As we saw you come up the landing, we were saying that here is one person we can proudly present outside our country." That is how intimate our interactions could be.

There is another instance I remember. The king said, "I have built a small house, a bungalow, by Phewa Taal. You have to come over and stay with me for a few days as my guest."

I replied, "I like the idea of spending time with Your Majesty."

"But you have to bring her as well," he said, referring to Sushila. He then went to Pokhara. I had some work, and said that I would come over as soon as that was done. Sushila was unable to go, so I went alone, and the king and queen were very kind to me. The house is built as a bungalow, somewhat like a cottage. The furnishings were also the kind you find in a cottage, with simple rattan bedsteads, chairs and dressing tables, personally chosen and imported from South India. The place was well appointed, with everything a guest would need. Everything had been set up by the queen.

The king's military secretary had come to receive me at the airport in Pokhara. When I got to the bungalow, the king was standing there with

the queen at the portico. "Where is Sushilaji? Oh, I knew she would not come," the queen complained. I replied, "She could not come because our daughter took ill." The queen said she would show me my room and took me across. She had arranged for everything.

At that time, the king's own family was present there in Pokhara, as well as Surendra Bahadur Shah's brother, the man who used to wear rouge on his cheek and walk around made up like a lady. A couple of the king's relations were also present, his maternal uncles.

Then it was time to prepare for dinner, and I saw that the king and queen had spared a good deal of thought for me. The king pointed at a dish and said, "That was prepared for you specially by the queen. Why have you not tried it?"

Later, I used to enter the kitchen while the queen was working, and she would say jocularly, "Oh, why are you entering the woman's world?" I have seen the queen, seated on a wooden *pirka* on the ground, working like a middle-class lady, all covered up in a shawl; that, too, one that was not very expensive. I have seen her working like that, cleaning and cutting vegetables, and was extremely impressed. She was not at all aristocratic. She would complain, "You never indicate what you like to eat."

My reply was, "I like whatever Your Majesty prepares."

The royal couple thus gave me not only respect, but also affection, honour as well as love.

I remember yet another episode during my stay there in Pokhara, which lasted about a week. We were seated on the roof, and I addressed the king, "Your Majesty has trained in music. If possible, I would like to hear you sing." He said, "No it is nothing. It is very...okay, come on upstairs." There were two rooms, with musical instruments in one of them, a harmonium, tabla, and so on. I do not know what the other room contained. King Mahendra called the queen and asked for some drinks. She placed the drinks before us, and he then asked her to leave us to ourselves. There was seating outside on the roof, but we stayed inside.

The two of us were alone in that room, and I remember the king really opened up to me there. He said, "You know, my life has been spent very much alone. My childhood was rather lonely. I had no friends and I developed intimacy with no one. I grew up amidst servants, and it was my *bubu* nurse who brought me up. Singers and performers used to come to the palace, and from them I tried to learn to sing.

"I hear Your Majesty is given to much study," I said, because I knew someone named Narayan Banskota, who used to say every so often, "I need that book for the king to read." Banskota had a large library. He was

a good and intelligent man, who also brought out a monthly named *Pragati*. He used to keep books by Camus, and other serious modern works. I used to ask him, "Does the king understand Camus?" These were the days before I became prime minister, and Banskota would reply, "Yes, he does. He takes great interest."

So, when I asked the same question to the king, he replied, "No, I have not read Camus, nor Sartre. I have just read some general Hindi works. When did I get the opportunity to study?" I had broached the subject with great difficulty, and found the king very sincere in his reply. He then played me some music and sang a bit, with the harmonium for accompaniment. I did not find it very impressive, and felt that he had not trained his voice enough. The king, too, admitted, "It has been long since I have practised. I am singing now only because you insisted."

I said, "Your Majesty has such a fine facility of self-expression. Your Majesty also writes poetry. You must develop these capabilities further."

He said, "Yes, I think I should."

I said, "You must also improve your musical performance by keeping an instructor. You have the interest, which I do not. I like to listen to music, but I do not understand it."

I am trying to describe the personal level at which we used to interact, the king and I. He confided, "You have been my first personal guest ever." This was what his father had said as well, when I had stayed as his guest at the Narayanhiti Royal Palace. Here was King Mahendra, repeating the same thing, "You have been my only personal guest. All others have been official guests."

I have already described the queen's disposition. I stayed there for five or six days as their guest in Pokhara, and I was treated very well and with great affection. This is why I have always questioned myself, why did the king do what he did, given our fine personal chemistry. And I was constantly asked later, "What went on between you and the king during those visits?"

There were those who used to say that it was all make-believe on the king's part, for example when he wrote that poem addressed to me in Dang. But I do not believe so. In my reading of the king's psychology, there was a mixture of affection and animosity in that. There was also an element that injected fear into him; it may have been from outside or inside our party. He may have felt that I would not heed him, and was perhaps wary of my growing international image, and my growing political strength. These factors must have affected the king's attitude towards me. But, at the same time, he also had faith in me and confidence that he could open

up and share even his innermost weaknesses. I doubt that he ever confided with others as he did with me.

Whatever be the case, I have described the last day's events many times before. It is strange, all that the king said before he jailed me, for example at that party he gave in my honour. I do believe that some people did an efficient job of striking fear in the king's heart. He used to believe that I engaged in all sorts of conspiracies when I went abroad. While on a tour of Israel, the Israelis had gifted me some Uzi guns, and I had told the king about this. That equipment took its time to come by air, but it turned out that the king was continually anxious about it. Acting on his instructions, Mohan Bikram came by again and again to enquire and then took the guns away when they finally arrived. Biswabandhu's biggest assistance to the king was to confirm that there was no possibility of an armed reaction from our side were he, the king, to act. This was the contribution of the likes of Biswabandhu. Other than that, what contribution did they make?

A rumour made the rounds, that King Mahendra was about to take some action, and certainly he had made his feelings known in statements while on tour. On the other hand, whenever we met he had justifications ready. Amidst all this, the questions before us was, what do we do?

Our parliament was running very smoothly. In fact I do not think its record was any less worthy than the early meetings of the Indian parliament under Jawaharlalji. Krishna Prasad Bhattarai's role as speaker was extraordinary. The opposition representatives were also proper parliamentarians. The main opposition party was the Gorkha Parishad, made up of 18 members of parliament, each of whom had been asked to seek expertise in a different field. For example, if an education bill came up, one or two former professors or teachers would be asked to help them understand the issue. Debates in parliament used to be quite healthy. I remember speaking angrily from the floor once or twice, but generally I used to be quite restrained in the House.

We made Biswabandhu the chief whip of the parliamentary party. The job calls for helping the government, and maintaining links between the members of parliament and the larger party. But whatever a chief whip can do wrong, that Biswabandhu did. In fact, he did exactly the opposite of what he was supposed to do. He had wanted to be made a minister, but I had stood firm on rejecting this demand. He then demanded from Subarnaji a status equal to that of a minister. I told Biswabandhu, "Why should your rank be equal to that of a minister? You are a member of parliament. Perhaps as Speaker you need to do some extra readings, but

that is not reason enough to give you ministerial ranking.”

Biswabandhu’s demands were for a car, a couple of secretaries, a house, and so on. Subarnaji said, “Let’s give him what he wants if it will calm him down.” I replied, “I do not want to spoil him.” Biswabandhu was continuously trying to provoke the legislators when opportunities arose during the debates on bills, but he was hardly successful.

The king then began to call over our representatives individually for tea. Obviously, the fact of the queen herself serving tea would make an impression. Today, it is normal to see the king engaging in politics, but it was not at all usual back then. I had not formally prohibited such meetings, but I had expressed my displeasure to the king, saying that it was inappropriate for the ministers to meet the king in their individual capacities without my knowledge. Once, the king asked me, “Tell me, should I not be allowed to meet the ministers?” I replied, “Why of course you can call them, Your Majesty.” However, I was also alerting my ministers that they could not bypass the prime minister and go talk to the king. I was trying to set a precedent.

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We were, of course, very concerned about the country’s development, and I believe it was that parliament which articulated the very concept. Also, we felt that in order to be elected to government every five years we must try to spread our financial resources in such a way that there were some results to show in every corner of the country. Ganesh Manji was in charge of the Construction Department, and he was immersed in his work. Our entire council of ministers was working all out to get results. Of course, we did come to hear that some ministers were making money, that they did this and that.

Once, the king told me, “I am getting too many reports about your ministers.”

I said, “Your Majesty can order investigations.”

He had complaints against four of our ministers, Ganesh Manji, Shivaraj Pant, Prem Raj Angdambe and my personal secretary, Tarini. The king said they were reported to have made money on the sly.

I replied, “I can hardly go on the basis of unfounded rumours. If Your Majesty has some proof, please pass it to me, in which case I can even start criminal proceedings.”

“Shall I give you the proof?” the king said.

I said of course. At that, he first raised the case of Ganesh Manji related to buying a building that we required to house members of parliament, or maybe it was for some other purpose. One of Juddha Shumshere's sons had inherited a large piece of property in Jawalakhel, and we had decided to purchase it. I think this job came under Ganesh Manji's department. He carried out the purchase, after which there was an uproar and he was accused of graft. There were rumours, but Ganesh Manji was a senior colleague. It was not possible to pay attention to innuendo, and besides I did not believe that he was capable of such indiscretion.

The king reported that Ganesh Manji had made a lakh rupees on the deal. I said, "In that case, Your Majesty, there will have to be a secret investigation."

"Can you do that?" he asked.

"Why not? Bishnumani is Your Majesty's trusted lieutenant in the Valley. He is also a local person. He can investigate."

The king agreed, and then I called Bishnumani in and told him, "Carry out a private enquiry and give me a secret report. Find out if there was some misuse of funds."

He did his work and came back to me five or six days later to say, "No, it's all clean. There has been no misuse of funds."

I told him, "Please also report this to the king." He said he had already told the king.

When I met the king, I said, "I have the report. It turns out that the rumour was false."

The king insisted, "But there is still a discrepancy of one lakh rupees in the accounts." What seemed to have happened was that the man had taken a lot of loans. He was sunk in debt with some Newar *sahus*, including one we knew. The sum in question had been used to repay the loans, but the man's wife had submitted a plea to the king, on which basis the latter had acted. She had written in the *bintipatra*, "They took so much underhand money when they did the transaction. I did not get a share." The money had actually been deposited in the bank, but she had not disclosed that fact to the king.

I called Bishnumani once again and asked him to look into the matter. I think Bishnumani finally told the king, "Your Majesty, there is a sum of two lakhs in her name in the bank." It was something like that, one lakh or two lakh. The king finally fell silent, for there was nothing more to be said.

Then the king said, "Shiva Raj Pant has begun to take bribes from loggers. Someone who paid him money has come and reported to me."

I said, "I can immediately start a criminal case against him. Shall we proceed?"

The king replied, "In that case, he is about to pay up ten thousand rupees today. If he signs a paper upon receipt, then we can catch him."

I said, "Fine, either of us can do it."

The next day, what does the king do but send me a message: "I decided not to get involved in this kind of affair, so have cancelled the plan."

About Tarini, too, I told the king, "I will not take any action without proof. If Your Majesty will furnish proof, I will charge him of criminal misconduct."

He was never able to provide proof. The rumour mill, however, was extra active, and the king was also part of it. The opposition parties, of course, were fully engaged in spreading rumours. The likes of Rishikesh used to be very active in this kind of work earlier. Later, when I became prime minister, he was not here. But earlier, when I was home minister, he was involved in distributing pictures of me at play, dancing with ladies, or blindfolded, which would be described as "B.P. Koirala's Krishna Lila." However, he did not do this in the latter period.

Angdambe was the minister for food. His private secretary was Balram Pyakurel, a real charlatan, a student leader who later became Patan's magistrate. It was because of him that the king complained to me about Angdambe, disclosing some very personal information. I said, "The prime minister cannot intervene on a matter so very personal. For the same reason, Your Majesty should not even show interest in such matters."

So, those were the four names that the king brought up before me.

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What remains to be said concerns my external visits. I was intent on attaining two objectives: getting as much assistance as possible from foreign powers and generating the maximum amount of international goodwill for Nepal. In terms of foreign policy, we did already have good relations with India. Jawaharlalji himself had shown goodwill by insisting that I be prime minister. I had good relations with China as well. In fact, the Chinese had made a special effort to develop our relationship, and this is why I do not believe that they had a role in our ouster in 1960. The Indians insisted that the Chinese were involved, but I believe they had absolutely no hand in it.

The Chinese invited me over for a visit. They themselves suggested

that since it was cold in the winter I should come in April or thereafter. India was yet to extend an invitation. The newspapers wrote about the Chinese invitation and my acceptance. The Indian ambassador came to me and said, "India and Nepal have such a special relationship. It will not be good if you visit somewhere else before coming to India. You should come to us first." When I replied, "But I keep going to India," He said, "No, I am talking about a state visit."

Now that would have been difficult, for important men were coming on state visits to India those days. The ambassador handed me an invitation from Jawaharlalji and said, "You have to come to attend our 26 January celebrations." I immediately accepted the invitation, for it was important, after all, that I visit India before going to China. And so in January of 1960 I travelled to India on a state visit. There was no real problem between us at that time; in fact, relations were very good. They had promised to provide as much assistance as we required. On the other hand, I had already started having strong differences of opinion with the Indian ambassador, Bhagwan Sahay. Later, he was removed by Jawaharlalji.

Jawaharlalji had already come here once upon my invitation, before my visit to India. At that time, we had argued over each word of the joint communique we had released. Nehru would show me the paper and ask, "So, is this draft okay?" I stayed with him till 11 at night, before we came out with the final text. Our emphasis was on independence, whereas his was on a 'special relationship' between the two countries. We were able to come to an understanding which was not bad. He had brought senior people on his team, including T.N. Kaul, who I think helped with that draft.

I have some memories of Jawaharlalji's visit when I was home minister. Indira Gandhi and Rajiv accompanied him. We gave Jawaharlalji a gracious welcome, and I went on a tour with him, showing him our art and architecture. In order to show him around, I had to read up a lot about this place. I was thus able to learn, all over, about Nepal and Nepali art. I read Sylvain Levi's writings on Patan, which left me, the guide, captivated. As Sylvain Levi wrote, "I have been to so many ancient capitals, such as Tokyo, Kyoto and so on. But standing there on Patan's Darbar Square, amidst that space, seeing the mountain ranges and the town, with its fine temples, I felt an appreciation for art that I have not elsewhere." I related all this to Jawaharlalji. I took him over to Patan, where we also had a public meeting. "This is the very spot that Levi spoke of," I told him.

I also took Jawaharlalji to Bhatgaon. Much has been said about Bhatgaon and the golden gate that stands there in the square on the way

to the temple, a gate which can be compared for its fine metalwork to the Gates of Paradise of Florence. I forget who made it, but Michaelangelo said it was truly a gate of heaven. However, that gate is nothing compared to the Golden Gate of Bhatgaon. When I said that, Jawaharlalji returned to look at it, and we then entered through it to go to the temple. He had a picture of himself taken by the gate. He had a lot of pictures taken, and I still have one with Indira Gandhi. All this was back when I was home minister. When I was prime minister, our discussions were centred on political matters.

Then the matter of the state visit to India came up. Bhagwan Sahay, India's ambassador, was given to talking big. I did like one aspect of his personality. He was an artist, and whenever he got some free time from diplomacy, he would go into his studio and paint or sculpt. That impressed me, and I liked his sculptures. However, I felt that he favoured the communists, like T.N. Kaul and others. I only sensed that, it was not clearly expressed. I did not like it that he treated us as if we derived our power from them, India. We did not take to that. Before I became prime minister, we used to exchange visits. One could hardly continue that once I became prime minister, however.

The Gandak Agreement was the main challenge before us as I took up my office. The issue had been dragging for years, and I said we should get it over with. I had the project studied and then told the concerned minister, I think it was Ganesh Manji, that beyond the technical aspects I would personally look into the political ramifications. I myself called in some engineers and discussed the matter with them. I said that if India benefits without any loss to us from the project, I had no problem with it. However, we must protect our interests, and this concerned two factors—water and electricity. I felt that we should keep the water we needed before handing the rest over to them. They all gave me a figure indicating our requirement (for irrigation). I said, "No, add some more. Add one lakh *bigha* more."

They said, "But there is no space to use that water, because irrigation is possible only in the plains below the barrage. Above the barrage are the hills." I said, "Even so, keep the provision for the irrigation of one lakh *bigha* on paper. We will come to an understanding." That is what I said during our discussions on the Gandak, and later I also had them add whatever could be added on our side. Then I declared, "Now, let us approve this." We made modifications to the draft that had come from the other side, and our council of ministers also approved the plan. I cannot say if I made that decision in a rush, that can be debated. Perhaps I made a mistake, or perhaps I received faulty advice. However, I do take full

responsibility for the Gandak Agreement. I am not one to pass the blame on to a certain minister, and to say that I did not know. I made the decision after studying the entire matter.

With the king raking up all kinds of problems, one day he said, "Come, let's go somewhere to have tea. Let's go to Godavari." He had a camp in Godavari, and on the way over we saw his father-in-law Hari Shumshere near the place where Gauri Joshi has a house today. He was standing there with some eight or ten peasants. He was calling out, "Your Majesty, we have been badly treated." However, the king did not stop for him. The road had not been black-topped at that time.

Once we got to Godavari, King Mahendra asked me all about the Gandak negotiations. He took out a map he had brought along. I told him all I knew, and he said, "You should also raise the matter of our right to fisheries." I felt that that was an insignificant issue, and that the king was bringing it up because he had no other argument.

Hari Shumshere was still standing there on our return, apparently waiting for us. As he saw the king's limousine coming, he once again came up to the roadside. Denouncing me, he shouted, "Your Majesty, we peasants are suffering." The king turned to Queen Ratna and said, "Buwa has some papers in his hands, why don't you take them?" We did not stop, but he had the car slow down and his military secretary picked up the papers. The king took the papers, but he showed no reaction. It could have been a drama staged by the king himself, in order to illustrate the reaction my land reform measures were generating.

Following that discussion with the king, I went to the Indian ambassador and said, "Everything else is set, but we must discuss the fishery rights on the Gandak."

He flared up and said, "What kind of child's play is this? We sent you our draft, and our cabinet has already adopted the text with your suggested modifications. And now you are talking about changing it?"

"But this is an insignificant matter."

He continued angrily, "No, this is not the way we do things." He was giving vent to his anger with me on other matters as well.

"It's all right then, if it's not possible."

The ambassador replied, "But then there will be more trouble. Okay, I will go and talk to His Majesty. I just don't seem to be able to hit it off with you all."

There was some kind of welcome ceremony organised by the Indian ambassador and the king had been invited. The ambassador apparently raised the matter with the king, and now here is the king himself telling

me, "Now, I am told there is a complication on an insignificant matter." And it was he who had asked me to take a stand on the matter of fisheries. He then takes to sending Nara Pratap to me with instructions that I do this or that.

That complication was resolved. I had not even considered it a problem, but neither did I like the Indian ambassador for having spoken to me so crudely. I had therefore refused to attend the signing ceremony. The custom was for the concerned minister to do the signing, but the prime minister's presence would have raised the gravity of the moment. Earlier, we had even agreed that the prime minister would affix his signature. But I told Subarnaji, "Please go in my place."

"That will not look good," he said.

"Good or bad, I will not go. He did not behave properly. Besides, we have agreed on the text, and your signature is as good as the government's."

The king had suggested organising some entertainment, and I had suggested doing it the day of the signing. Surya Prasad had just arrived from some visit, and he tried to get me to go, but I refused. "The king is organising a poetry reading; that's where I will be." The poets were gathered at Seto Darbar, and I went over. After a while, the chief of protocol, Prakatman Singh, who was quite elderly, came looking for me. He said, "The Indian ambassador is asking, 'Where is the prime minister? Isn't he coming?'"

I replied, "I have already said I will not come."

But the ambassador apparently demanded to see the letter of authority allowing Subarnaji to sign. And so I said, "Bring me a letter, I will sign the authority over to Subarnaji." Prakatman Singh went and prepared a letter on official stationery, and I signed it and sent it off. Subarnaji signed that Gandak Agreement. It was from that moment that my relationship with the Indian ambassador soured.

There had been one other incident before that. The ambassador had come with a message from Jawaharlalji; I forget what it was. There are documents with red seals that have to be hand-delivered. Then there is another kind of document which is only to be read out and not left behind. This was the kind of message which had to be read out and the ambassador suggested that I come to his residence. If it were an unofficial matter, I would have gone to his house at any time as a friend, ten times if I wanted to. But in that instance, I refused to go. He had sent over his cultural attache, my friend Shivamangal Singh Suman, to ask me over. "You could go over for breakfast or dinner," Shivamangal suggested.

“No, he has to come here.”

The ambassador had no choice. One of his concerns was whether there would be someone to escort him. I said, “Of course there will be someone. It will be as it should be when the ambassador of a great and friendly neighbour comes to meet the prime minister.” I notified the people at the gate, and gave instructions about how he was to be ushered in. We were watching from the window, and saw him as he entered the first courtyard of Singha Darbar, turning his head and taking everything in. When he came up, he said, “This is the first time I have come to the Singha Darbar like this, to meet you officially.” Of course, there had been many parties in the lobby at the front, but he had apparently never come further. And so, that was how we began and it got much worse with our altercation over the Gandak Agreement.

There is one other incident I must relate. I was going to Pokhara, the king having invited me as his guest. Tarini had already left his editorship, and Kishori Raman Rana used to work at the paper. I was already in the plane, which was the government’s Dakota, when Kishori Raman Rana came rushing in. He showed me a piece of paper, and asked whether he should translate and print it. I said, “I cannot reply now. Let me return from Pokhara, then you can go ahead and print it.”

I looked at the piece of paper, and saw nothing objectionable in it. It was about how the Himalayan states of Sikkim, Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet should be part of a confederation. Such a confederation would create a buffer between the larger neighbours China and India. I thought that was logical and actually rather original. In that manner, Tibet too would be included, and it might have managed to extricate itself from China. We were, of course, already independent. Besides, this arrangement would not endanger India in any way. So I instructed, “Go ahead and print it, I do not have that much objection to it. Besides, it is your newspaper, not the government’s.”

The story must have appeared one evening; the next day, a little after breakfast, I received a phone call. It was the Indian ambassador, saying, “I will come over immediately to meet you.” I asked him to come later to the office instead. However, he said he would like to come right away if I had the time. I was in the garden with Chetana, and told him, “You are welcome.”

Chairs were set out on the lawn. He came rushing, and said, “What is this article all about?”

I replied, “What is the problem with this? This is not our paper. My brother used to edit it, but now even he is no longer there.”

He responded, "No, the management of the paper has not changed. Does this story represent the government's viewpoint?"

I said, "This is not the government's line, and I do not see how there could be objections to this article." I repeated my point of view to him. Looking back, I realise how ignorant I was of these imperialist notions, which I understand now. Back then, I was too naive.

I said, "I would have thought that if you had a buffer state in between, against the backdrop of the Sino-Indian conflict, China would be pushed thousands of miles away from India. What objections could you have to that?"

"Would China agree?" was his pointed question.

"There would be no further discussion if China disagreed. Maybe the confederation would then be made up of just three members."

"No, we will not agree, because it would be limited to only three," he said.

I responded, "Listen, whenever a proposal is presented, and it can have two outcomes, you cannot insist that you will only agree to one and not the other."

He left, very angry, after hearing my argument. I used to keep having quarrels of that sort with him. The day of his departure came close, but I was not excited about giving him a farewell party, even though it was customary. When I was asked to give him a formal send-off, I said, "Have the Protocol Department organise it, I will not host one." As for the matter of seeing him off, that was the job of the chief of protocol and there was no question of my taking part. The ambassador let it be known that he preferred that the prime minister give the farewell party, and, of course, I would have had no problem with that had the situation been different. I would have privately hosted a party in his honour, but now the question did not arise in my mind. I told Subarnaji, "Why don't you host a party? You are also a personal friend of his. You give the party, and we will attend."

The farewell party was organised by Subarnaji. It was called for 8 pm, but the ambassador deliberately arrived late, at nine. We waited for him to show up, and when he arrived he said, "I got delayed because there were so many dear friends to meet." He had assisted a lot of people, and an artist or someone had apparently given a party in his honour. Whatever may have been the case, I felt that he had deliberately delayed his arrival at the party given by the deputy prime minister, who had organised a grand event. He came and stayed a while. We did not even have much of a meeting, although other conversations went well. It was a very cold day

in December, and the hall was not that warm.

That's the kind of differences we had with Bhagwan Sahay, who then left Kathmandu.

There is one more story that remains to be told in that connection, which I might as well bring up now. As I said, I was so angered by the Indian ambassador's behaviour on the Gandak matter I did not attend the signing ceremony. I think he realised how angry I was. The project director of the Gandak and Kosi projects was a prominent officer of the Indian Civil Service in Bihar, one Sinha. He was like a joint-chairman of both projects, and he came over to me and said, "Koiralasaheb. I gather that your feelings have been wounded. If that is indeed the case, our leader Jawaharlalji says that B.P. Koirala's friendship is more important than even the Gandak Agreement. An agreement signed on a piece of paper is not as important as fellow-feeling with B.P. Koirala."

He had brought with him the papers of the Gandak Agreement. I said, "No, I have already approved this. My only problem has been the ambassador's attitude. If I had not approved it, the document would never have been signed. The matter is closed." He had come to provide clarifications, saying, "We do not want an agreement on which you have objections, of whatever kind." Perhaps this was diplomacy at work, but that is what he had come to tell me. That was one incident.

I then went to India on the state visit. First, I landed in Patna. When one is invited on a state visit, they first give you an itinerary and ask if you have any special requests. I told them, "Sushila is also coming, so I would like to see the Taj Mahal." So Agra was added, the only addition I made. The kind of reception we received at Patna airport, I think, would have been surpassed perhaps only by that for Jawaharlalji. It caught me quite unawares. Looking down from the plane which had been provided for me by Jawaharlal Nehru, I saw only a sea of humanity.

The Bihar governor had come to the airport even though he customarily greeted only heads of state in that manner and not heads of government. Zakir Hussain was the governor; he later became president of India. He had come, and everyone else was also there. I was taken to the governor's residence, where we were to stay. There were meetings to address, cultural programmes to attend. The public had poured in not just because the government had made arrangements, but because of my personal attachment to so many there.

The Patna visit touched me deeply. After all, I had spent 10-12 years there, happy as well as sad. Patna had been my headquarters during our revolution of 1951. Earlier, this was the city where I had served the Socialist

Party. I knew so many people in Patna. The journalists, professors, teachers, students, people big and small. And Zakir Hussain, with whom I had stayed as a guest a couple of times, was one of the finest of men.

There were no political discussions in Patna as that trip was mainly to meet the many friends I had there. Sushila and some others said that they would like to remain in Patna for a few days, while the official itinerary had me attending a few events in Bihar. One was to lay the foundation stone of the Gandak Project, for which we went by plane to a place called Bhaissalotan. There was a huge gathering of people, and I returned after addressing the mass. Then I went to Jamshedpur, with a state minister in attendance. Thereafter, we flew straight to Bareilly, with its large military cantonment. We visited the West Sarada Canal, and I was shown some military exercises.

Sushila joined me in Bareilly and from there we went to Bangalore, where, too, the welcome was gratifying. The governor there gave me a grand reception. The size of the crowd gave me the sense that I had substantial popular support. Lots of rich Nepalis had ended up living in Bangalore. Prime Minister Mohan Shumshere, Defence Minister Babar Shumshere, his brother Krishna Shumshere, all were there. So we renewed some personal contacts as well. Babar Shumshere came to receive me at the airport with Krishna Shumshere, whom I had not met before.

I will relate an incident from Poona, where we arrived next from Bangalore. Harishwar Dayal, who had been appointed Indian ambassador to Nepal and had already joined office, was with us in Poona with his wife. I had been given a nice enough suite, and he had been assigned a longish apartment. His wife protested that she would not stay in a rotten place like that, and Dayal was in a bit of a quandary. Later, they were shifted to another room. Singha Shumshere was staying in Poona, and he and his wife showed us a lot of courtesy. He invited us to stay at his place. Singha Shumshere had married the king's elder or younger sister, the same being the case with Krishna Shumshere.

A lot of my socialist friends came to the welcoming ceremony in Poona. I finally arrived in Delhi, where, too, I received a grand welcome, the kind given to state visitors. I was put up in the house of the Hyderabad Nizam, where King Tribhuvan had stayed earlier. It was not Rashtrapati Bhawan because the Russian President Voroshilov, who was also in Delhi, was there with his entourage. But this, too, was a palace, of the Nizam.

I would like to recount a couple of incidents, one related to Indira Gandhi, who was not that well known then. We knew, of course, that she was Jawaharlalji's daughter, and she used to come over and ask Sushila

if she was interested in going anywhere. She said, "Koiralaji has his work. If you want to see some places, or go shopping, I will take you." Sushila was not able to find much time, but because the offer had been made she did go once to the market and came back with a shawl. It was a very pretty piece of work, but rather old. It fell apart to the touch. They said it was a rare kind of piece, a couple of hundred years old. She also bought some other things. Indira Gandhi acted a proper host towards Sushila, taking her shopping and being very courteous. She would carry Chetana, who was still a baby.

Meanwhile, I was busy with my work, going from meeting to meeting. The defence minister of India was B.K. Krishna Menon; he used to come over and we would talk. We also held some discussions about trade and commerce. Our feeling was that if we advanced economically, and if we established industries, there was a great market available in India. Because of low labour costs in Nepal, we would be able to offer industrial products at better rates. We also felt that we might be able to attract Indian capital because we did not have strong labour laws, nor the kind of income tax prevalent south of the border.

I was convinced that we should promote industries in Nepal in order to penetrate the Indian market. I repeated this refrain wherever I went. I demanded that our manufactures be allowed to enter the Indian market without barriers, but that we would have to set up some controls to the entry of Indian goods, such as by applying duties. It may look like we were seeking an unequal relationship, but this was important for our economic development. This is the principal point I remember making during the trip.

The Indian side believed that I was leaning a bit towards China, and so the newspapers were very critical of me. I felt the need to clarify my position, and in public rather than with the government, and so used the public reception given in my honour at the Red Fort for the purpose. Jawaharlalji had accompanied me to the programme which had been organised there. I gave a speech, which must be in the records. There is a large space known as the Diwan-e-Aam within the fort, where the Mughal emperors used to host public audiences. There was a throne above, and the people would be seated below. Jawaharlalji saw that the crowd was thin and decided that we must have come early. Actually, we had got there at the proper time. In order to keep us occupied for a while, he asked Sushila, "Have you seen the Red Fort?"

She replied, "No, I have not been here before.

"Come, I will show you," he said. I think he did this to allow time for

people to gather. He took us into the chamber where the emperor used to give closed audiences, the Diwan-e-Khaas. There is bit of verse inscribed there in stone, which he explained to us: "If there is a heaven anywhere, it is here, it is here, it is here."

He then took us to the battlements of the fort and indicated where the Jamuna River used to flow close by in ancient times, but how its course had now moved to the east. Jawaharlalji was explaining all this to Sushila and we were following the two of them. He then guided us back to the Diwan-e-Aam, saying it was late. The place was packed by that time, and we received all kinds of gifts. We had also received many presents in Patna, and Zakir Hussain had gifted books and works of art.

I was facing a challenge, that of defining the relationship between Nepal and India. I always used to say, and this must be recorded somewhere, that our ties should not be interpreted only on the basis of ancient history and culture. That is not an unimportant aspect. Look at Europe; it may be one culturally, but they were always fighting and killing each other there. It was clear that good relations cannot be maintained on the basis of cultural affinity alone. Distrust does not disappear just because there is cultural unity. Relationships are dependent upon differing perspectives on society and differing expectations we have of the future. What I said was this, "Our attitude and perspectives are no different than yours. We have historical links, which are not necessary to reiterate. An allied point of view can be developed by understanding what you see of the future, and what kind of future I want to create, and how we may jointly create it. And I believe that as far as the future and the path to reach that future are concerned, in that we are both on the same track."

I used to emphasise this matter. There at the Red Fort, I was required to respond to the welcome address. On the podium were seated Dr K.M. Panikkar and Vijayalaxmi Pandit. Sushila was also there with me, as well as some others. I think it was Vijayalaxmi Pandit who introduced me. When it came my turn, I told the gathering, "I propose to speak in Hindi, because you all understand Hindi. Although I do not speak good Hindi, I do not think it appropriate to address you in English or Nepali. I will try to express my thoughts clearly, but please disregard my poor Hindi." Later, when he got up to thank me, Jawaharlalji had praise, saying, "Hearing him speak, I wish I had his command of the language." He did say that, though later a couple of people told me that he was just trying to make me feel good.

I will summarise what I said in that address at the Red Fort. I said: "As a friend, I wish to tell you about my problems. I do not feel that the national

interests of India and Nepal clash in any arena. It is a different matter, however, if India wishes to represent the viewpoint of countries other than itself, and do injustice to its own nationalist viewpoint. There is no contradiction or distance between the patriotic Nepali and the patriotic Indian. But how many of you here are true nationalists, can you tell me, with a hand over your heart?" That is what I said, facing that large gathering. It was a public meeting organised by the Nepal-India Friendship Association. Panikkar spoke there, as did Jawaharlalji, and in my speech I was harsh on those who attacked me. There were those who criticised my trying to maintain good bilateral relations with China. However, I was not criticised as much then as I am today. I did not raise the matter of Russia, but I did say, "I have a problem with those of you who do not have love for your country in your hearts."

After I came down from the podium, I was surrounded by the audience. I myself was extremely satisfied by what I had just said, having spoken for about 40 minutes. As I came down, Jawaharlalji said right away that we should depart. He had this habit of not tarrying anywhere. Once a job was done, he preferred to head straight for the car. But there, I was surrounded by a crowd, including pressmen. You know that person, Baleshwar Agarwal, he came up and said, "Koirala Saheb, you gave an extremely good speech." Members of parliament also said the same. That was my only public address, as most other speeches were given at official events. I myself was quite satisfied and I felt that I made a good impression. Jawaharlalji was waiting in the car to take me back.

That was one significant event. Another occurred during a dinner given by Jawaharlalji, at Rashtrapati Bhawan. Over here, we lengthen the drinking period needlessly, and there is not enough time set aside for the actual meal. For example, an hour is spent on drinks and an hour for eating. That was not Jawaharlalji's way. He would allow only 15-20 minutes for drinks, and he himself would not take a glass. The British ambassador was speaking to me, and others were trying to, but Jawaharlalji came over and said, "It is now time to eat. I invited you for dinner, not for drinks." I felt that was quite appropriate.

Then I myself hosted a dinner party at the Ashoka, which was the largest hotel in Delhi. The attendance was good and by the time I arrived, about ten minutes before Jawaharlalji, there was standing room only. I was surrounded by people wanting to speak to me, but then Jawaharlalji arrived and, as instructed by our ambassador, I went over to the lift to welcome him. He took a soft drink. Indira Gandhi had also come. A crowd gathered around Jawaharlalji, and another one around me. Jawaharlalji

asked me later where I had got lost. He finally found me while I was being buttonholed by Tarakeswari Sinha and said, "Ah, so, here I am looking for Koiralasaheb and where is he but speaking to a very pretty lady!"

We took our drinks and went in for dinner. The problem was that I did not know the procedure to follow in a banquet. Jawaharlalji was seated next to Sushila, and Indira Gandhi was by my side. I knew that I had to offer a toast to Jawaharlalji, but I did not know whether I had to do it standing after Jawaharlalji offered his toast. I asked Indira Gandhi, "What does one do? Do I also have to respond?" She replied, "In many places, people stand up and participate, or they nod their heads in acknowledgement. Do what you think is appropriate. You can respond either way." I decided to get on my feet and nod my head acknowledging Jawaharlalji. That bit of protocol was taught me by Indira Gandhi.

Thereafter, the president of India hosted a welcome reception on 26 January itself, if I recall properly. In Delhi, on that day, the president views a march-past from an open podium. We had been placed in the front row for that event. On one side of Jawaharlalji was Sushila and on the other was Mountbatten's wife, for she was also present. I noticed that Jawaharlalji was very attentive towards me; whenever he saw me he would come right over and say, "Come along." He made sure that it did not appear that he was neglecting me.

The president hosted a splendid garden party that day, on the lawns of the Rashtrapati Bhawan. Among the chief guests were President Voroshilov, myself, and some others as well. I noticed that Jawaharlalji was giving equal consideration to Voroshilov and me. He took the two of us together and introduced us around. Voroshilov had already been to Nepal, and Kuznetsov was with him, as well as one Kuzlov. Voroshilov was considered second-in-command in Russia, after Krushchev. However, he died of a heart attack before he could make the top post. I had a good relationship with them, and they were working very hard to bring me over to their side. Their relations with the Chinese had already gone sour.

I was much heartened by that visit to India. Jawaharlalji and Indira Gandhi had exhibited a fine and personal sensibility. I told them that I wanted to see two or three things. I was not interested in visiting large factories as we were not in a position to set those up in Nepal. I wanted to see, for example, small sugar mills, and also try and understand how India's hill regions were being developed. And so they arranged a programme Himachal Pradesh, and took us to Kalka and Shimla, as well as a place called Nahan. The lieutenant-governor of Himachal Pradesh

was Rafi's man, Raja Bhadri. He was the same person who had first been instructed by Surya Prasad during our revolution to provide arms and then later not to.

I received an official send-off in New Delhi. It was quite different from other such ceremonies because unlike others, who departed by air, I was taking a train to Kalka. It would be a night journey, departing at ten and arriving in the morning at about five. They had suggested that I fly, but I insisted on going by rail. They therefore saw me off at the Old Delhi Railway Station, with the diplomatic corps in attendance, red carpet, military honour guard, and so on. Once again, I observed Jawaharlalji's and Indira Gandhi's friendliness towards us.

I was on the platform taking leave of those who had come, while Sushila was already in the carriage. Jawaharlalji entered our compartment himself, felt the bedding, sat on it, and checked its width. He asked Sushila, "Are you sure this is all right? Is it comfortable enough? Is it okay?" Sushila said it was fine. It was a special coach, of course, but even more important was his concern. When I entered, I found Jawaharlalji there sitting on the bed, bouncing as he tested the springs. He shook my hand, and Indira Gandhi also entered. She herself carried Chetana into the compartment. It was with such courtesy and respect that they bade us goodbye. During our arrival in Delhi, at the airport, Indira Gandhi had carried Chetana to the car. That was how they showed personal affection.

We thus left for Kalka. There is a place called Pinjore there, where there is a very pretty garden, Pinjore Garden. It was about three in the morning, in the coldest season of early February. Tea had been organised at the garden. Nahan was about three or four hours away. They showed us the orchids in the garden there, as well as small sugar mills requiring investment of no more than seven lakh rupees.

Sushila's mother had been given in *kanya daan* by Dev Shumshere's wife, whose daughter had been married into a family in these parts, in Nahan. Sushila had spent a lot of time there while I was in Hazaribagh Jail. There had been a separate principality there at that time, but now all the little states had been united to make Himachal Pradesh. That family was in a bad state as we found out when they came to visit us. Their problem was that their government allowance was insufficient, and they asked us to tell the Indian government this. That was another episode related to our trip.

We then descended to Chandigarh, a city which had been developed in a modernistic style. From there, I was taken to Bhakra Nangal. While I

liked Chandigarh's urban design, I did not think it suited our purpose in Nepal. The governor there was Gadgil, and the chief minister was Pratap Singh Kairon. We were put up at the governor's guest-house, which was one of the ultra-modern buildings there. Gadgil was a very cultured man.

During our entire state visit, I was constantly trying to study what would be useful for us back in Nepal. That was also my effort during my subsequent visit to China. What I found most interesting about Himachal Pradesh was their orchids, cottage industry, handlooms and small sugar mills. I was also keen on what they had to say about electricity generation. In Himachal Pradesh, too, we were welcomed with great enthusiasm by the crowds.

I did not find much to inspire me in Chandigarh, but I do remember a personal incident. The question of having a picture taken came up. Pratap Singh Kairon's wife was rude and unrefined. It was arranged that I would sit on one side of the governor and Sushila on the other. After that would be seated Chief Minister Kairon and his wife. The lady said, "No, I have to sit up front," and pushed Sushila aside and took her place. Others protested, but Sushila said, "Let it be," and stepped aside. The lady created quite a stir there, but I noticed that Kairon was unable to say anything to her. That was quite a little commotion. I still have that picture with me.

After ending that leg of our state visit, I was given an official send-off in Chandigarh, and we returned to Nepal. I was completely satisfied with the visit. I was able to say what I wanted to, both to the Indian government and to the Indian people. I doubt that anyone from Nepal had received a welcome like the one I received. That was natural, too, because I was an elected leader, and I was also a recognised figure. I was also gratified by the very friendly disposition of Jawaharlalji.

All this added up to a very successful trip. During the visit, I also made most of the opportunity to respond to all that the Indian papers had said about me. People-to-people contact was also established. Wherever there were rallies, I would speak, and my message would always be: "During this period and process of development, our points of view are the same, which is why we are so very close." Once or twice, I even said, "If for some reason your system is overturned and your development goals are also changed, I cannot say whether we will remain with you at that time."

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Then in April we went to China. I heard from Ne Win after the programme for the visit had already been finalised. Yakthumba, our ambassador in Rangoon, was also sending insistent messages saying I must visit Burma, so I said I would do it during this trip. Thus, Ne Win invited me to stop over on the way to Peking. Since we had socialist friends there, I decided to visit even though I had not had much contact with Burma. Ne Win had toppled the government using military strength, and so the country was not under civilian rule. As commander-in-chief, Ne Win was in full control and the country was undergoing a kind of extra-constitutional period.

He gave me a grand reception at the airport. I said, "Ne Win, you have given me a great welcome." He replied, "We are small countries. If we do not show courtesy towards each other, we cannot expect the larger powers to do us the favour. This is a matter of common interest. You must show us respect, and we must return the favour." Ne Win liked to use coarse language, rather like a common soldier.

Then there was the matter of where I was to be put up. The person who was the president was apparently saying that according to protocol he could not host someone of prime ministerial rank. As Ne Win told me, "He is maintaining that the prime minister is the government's guest, but I have told him that he must host you rather than me."

I said, "Wherever it is, I would like to stay with you."

Ne Win replied, "No, you will stay with the president."

And so that was where I stayed, and the president came over as we arrived. He was living in opulent traditional style in a grand palace, with maids who served you on their knees.

I did not have much to do in Burma, and there was not much to discuss with them. The country had just gone through an election organised by Ne Win, in which the socialists had lost to U Nu. However, he had not yet taken up his position, although he was expected to in a day or two. I said to Ne Win, "I wish to meet my old socialist friends." He replied, "They will all come to the party given by the president. I have invited them all there. You will meet them there."

I insisted, "I will go to Ba Sway to meet him. Please give him a call." Ba Sway agreed to meet me, and he also called Chou Min and others. I also told my hosts, "I will go to U Nu's office as well," and they were all surprised. After all, I had a different relationship with U Nu than with the socialist group there. I thus had friendly meetings with all and exchanged views.

I was very disturbed by the socialists' loss in the Burmese elections and discussed it with Ne Win. He said, "These socialists gave the impression that the entire military was on their side, which was a mistake. It would have been better for them to have opposed me. I had wrested power from U Nu, which is why they gave the impression that they were close to us, the military. That was the main reason for their defeat. I had told them many times, "Do not let it show that you are associated with me. So what if I have a socialist background? I am a military man and the military took power.' U Nu was able to win the public's sympathy by saying that the army stole the power from him."

While I was there, the Israeli ambassador came to meet me. The worldwide situation was making it very difficult for Israelis to maintain contacts. And so when the question came up of a meeting with the Israelis, I had said, "I will be going to Burma. We can meet there." Israel and Burma had good relations. The Israeli ambassador there came over, and we decided that Nepal and Israel would establish bilateral relations. Our council of ministers had adopted the policy that we would willingly establish relations with whichever country approached us. This was already adopted as policy and the king had also signified his assent. We were therefore right in accepting proposals without clearance from the royal palace. Later, when a difference of opinion arose between the king and me about the relationship with Israel, I had reminded him of our agreement. The king had sent a couple of telegrams asking me not to make a decision, but it had already been decided to establish bilateral relations.

From Burma, we travelled to Hong Kong, spending a night there. We then went to the border by train, and in Canton we received a big welcome, the kind I am sure they give to all dignitaries who come. Staying that night and the next day in Canton, we left for Peking the following morning. We flew over in a special plane. There were actually two planes, and the one assigned to me was a very good one, with a double bed, washbasin, special arrangements for my daughter, and even a small office for me.

We arrived in Peking towards evening. Although it was already April, it was still very cold. I went through the ritual of salute, march-past and guard of honour, which was of a different kind. The system there was to stay in one place while the guards march past, whereas elsewhere the guest takes the salute while walking past stationary soldiers. And so, Chou En-Lai and I stood while the soldiers marched. They then escorted me to the guest-house where Jawaharlalji had also stayed. It had earlier served as the French embassy and was a beautiful place, very grandly

built. I had heard that while there, Jawaharlalji, while talking to some foreigner, had said, "Who knows about this place? Let's go out to the garden and talk there." That was where we stayed.

Chou En-Lai gave the impression that he was always with me during that trip as if he had nothing else to do but stay by my side and check on my welfare. A special nurse had been arranged for Chetana. It was freezing, and he said, "Its very cold here, so you must be prepared." I said, "But I do have an overcoat." He looked me over and replied, "No, this will not do." He then gave me an overcoat, and I still have that overcoat which Chou En-Lai gave me.

We then held our discussions, which were not of great importance. Liu Shao Chi was president then although the process of his downfall had already begun. I noticed he looked morose although I did not have much to do with him and met him only once or twice. There was one meeting when we were officially introduced, and he was also present during the signing ceremony of our friendship treaty. I still have a picture of that event. I talked almost an entire day with Chou En-Lai. He had invited me for breakfast, and I stayed there through breakfast, lunch and evening tea. There were only the two of us, besides an interpreter and a scribe.

I noticed a couple of things during that trip. The grandeur amidst which the Chinese leaders were living could not have been matched by any ruler of a capitalist state. In India, Jawaharlalji certainly lived in style but a far cry from the extravagance I witnessed in Peking. The leaders stayed in great comfort in the former emperor's grounds, in huge single-storeyed lakeside palaces that had great marble staircases and wall-to-wall carpeting. Chen Ye was the foreign minister, and he, too, lived in similar splendour. I even thought I detected his wife wearing diamond jewellery.

My hosts took me to observe the largest dam they were building, near Peking. We went quite far by special train and then took a road. It was a mountainous region, and from afar the workers looked like ants—thousands, hundreds of thousands of labourers at work on the dam. I was impressed by that. My hosts said, "We've brought you here to show you how we are using human labour rather than heavy machinery." Two million worked at that site, and they were using the *kharpan* to transport mud for the dam. Revolutionary music was being played to encourage the workers. Colonies had been established to house this population, which must have been a truly massive undertaking. All the workers were dressed in blue, and from afar they looked like ants at work.

I was impressed by some of the things I was shown, such as the ability to build huge structures without bulldozers, and without other heavy machinery. When later I asked Jawaharlalji why in India they could not build dams that way, he replied, "That is only possible in a dictatorship, where 20 lakh labourers can be put to work. It is not possible in a democracy." But I was impressed by that.

When I had invited Chou En-Lai to Nepal, I took to him to Pokhara, where a cement dam was being built. Seeing the construction, he said, "You have to import the cement and fly it in. There is no road. Why do you do this? Why not build an earthen dam? It holds better. A cement dam will break if there is a big flood." That was, in the end, what happened. A big flood did come, and that dam collapsed. I was impressed by what Chou said, and the worth of cement fell in my eyes.

Chou En-Lai then took me to a few communes, but I was not much impressed. We saw one commune producing implements and parts for small factories. I had read several books on communes, and so I did not need to be told too much about them. I noticed that the children were well taken care of. To begin with, Chinese children with their rosy cheeks have always looked healthy to me, healthier than children elsewhere in Asia. I noticed that the children were indeed doing well, but felt there was too much control over the people.

When we were touring one such commune, Sushila requested to see a kitchen, but that was not in their programme. While others were looking around, she slipped quickly into one dwelling. Inside, there were an elderly woman and her grandson. The condition inside was not as good as the outside indicated. Their diet seemed to consist of a lump of ground meal with some spinach. It did not seem very nutritious, but if this kind of diet was available in plenty to everyone then that was a different matter. I did not think that the situation there matched the publicity that the communes received. In fact, it seemed from the communes that they were very, very backward.

However, they were able to impress me with the building of dams, proving how you could use human labour even if you did not have capital. They also showed us small units producing corrugated roofing, which could be set up in any household. I did not know this technology, and I said, "If this is feasible everywhere, why should there be large steel factories like that of the Tatas in Jamshedpur?" However, that effort in China later proved to be a total failure; the claims made were nothing more than propaganda.

When we got off the train, I noticed that there was a big crowd on the

platform. It was the kind of crowd you would see in India when everyone would follow Jawaharlalji if he were to alight from a train. Here, in China, however, no one got up and we only heard them informing each other, "Chou En-Lai! Chou En-Lai!" There was no following him or shouting slogans. In fact, we had to actually step over many people as we proceeded. I rather liked all that because it showed the lack of control. Either it was that or they were not bothered. In any case, that is what I saw. I have already related how the leaders lived so opulently.

I have seen few people as cultured and civilised as Chou En-Lai. One was Jawaharlal Nehru. If I were to compare the two, I would say that Chou En-Lai was more accomplished. At times, his anger would show through, but I found him very suave in his dealings with Sushila, for example. It turned out that he was from the Mandarin clan, and he had studied in Paris. Jawaharlalji, too, could be said to be of the Mandarin clan, in the Indian context. In any case, Chou En-Lai and the others lived in great comfort in Peking, there was no doubt about that.

I myself had asked for a meeting with Mao Tse Tung, and my hosts had said that they would let me know. Meanwhile, they took us touring from place to place. There is a village called Hen Chow, a very scenic spot where the emperors of days past went in the hot months. There is the ocean there, an island, and a garden there—a very beautiful place. It was also, perhaps, a tourist spot. They showed us around the day we arrived and we had dinner at the mayor's. We got home at eleven at night, very tired.

Before that, in the evening at around four, Sushila had said, "Let's go see what's that in front of the hotel—is it a lake or the ocean?" The view was lovely, and so myself, Sushila, Surya Babu and a couple of others went out without telling anyone. There was a broad avenue which had to be crossed to get to the waterfront. We had crossed over and were seated on the ground when a cavalcade of cars drove up. I did not bother, but Surya Babu, who was very sharp, noticed the movement and said, "Some important person seems to have come to the hotel. That line of cars is just like ours."

I did not pay much attention to this, but at eleven that night, when we were getting ready for bed, there was a knock at the door. It was a messenger saying that Mao Tse Tung wanted to meet me. I was tired, and had also taken a bit of drink, but there was no choice but to go, so I put my clothes back on. When I put on my overcoat, they said, "There is no need for that, he is staying in a different part of this same hotel." As I got ready, the man asked, "Doesn't Mrs Koirala wish to meet him as well?" I replied, "Of

course she does." So I woke up Sushila, and she wrapped a shawl around her shoulder and we went over.

Mao Tse Tung was there, waiting for us in another lounge of the hotel. He came forward and greeted us with a great show of affection. He then called some photographers and asked them to take pictures. He asked Sushila, "How are you? Are you enjoying yourself?" He did what a courteous and civilised person would do. He then took us inside. The seating arrangement, I think, was how communists do it everywhere. We were seated next to each other with a table in between. We talked, although I did not have anything specific to say because all matters had already been discussed with Chou En-Lai. Mao said that he had received the full report of those discussions, and that China wanted to maintain friendly relations with Nepal. I too expressed similar sentiments.

I forgot to recount something I had said to Chou En-Lai. I met him the last time in Peking, where I told him that we needed economic assistance. I was trying to build up my country, and we needed meaningful support. India had given 18 crore rupees worth of aid, and I perhaps had mentioned that. He suggested, "We will provide you a little bit less than that."

I asked him, "Why don't you give the same amount as India?"

In reply, he said, "That may not be good for you or for us. For you, because India may become wary if we give you too much assistance. It would not be appropriate for us because the international community would take it that we are trying to compete with India. It is because we would like to develop friendly relations with you that we will provide you less assistance than India does. Please do not take it otherwise. We can give any amount, but that would be neither in your interest nor ours." This was very wise counsel. Chou En-Lai added, "You are better placed to get significant aid from India. Ours has to travel a long way and hence is bound to be more expensive. We should not try to compete with India in providing assistance either." I felt that this was a well-considered notion.

There, with Mao Tse Tung, I spoke up, "We are situated between two large nations, and this is a constant source of distress to us. Wrangling between large neighbours makes it very difficult for small states in the vicinity." At that time, relations between India and China were already on the downhill track. Mao Tse Tung replied, "But it is small states like yours which make it difficult for us. You cry murder even when we do nothing, and no one believes our protestations. Everybody prefers to believe you, the smaller states. These days the smaller states are all powerful."

Citing an incident and dates, he continued, "Earlier, we used to be

guided by the experience of Russia, because we considered it a big brother with greater experience, what with Lenin, the revolution and so on. But after that incident, we decided not to follow their direction. Within a few years after that, we came to power, and came to realise that going by the advice of others provided more benefit to them than to us. That has been our experience. You, too, should do what is good for you, rather than follow someone else's instructions." I do not know if he was referring to India, but that's what Mao Tse Tung told me.

Another matter we discussed was the border issue. On that, he signified that there was no great problem. Let Mount Everest remain a common summit, and let us call it a friendship summit, he suggested. I did not agree to that. I said, "But this falls within our country. How can we term it common?"

He said, "But you do not even have a name for it in your language, and you call it 'Mount Everest'."

I remembered at that time, or someone had reminded me, that it was known as 'Sagarmatha'. Even though I was new to that term, I replied, "You do not have a name for the peak either. 'Chomolongma' is a Tibetan name."

Mao Tse Tung replied, "Tibet is China." He then added, "Let us call this peak 'Friendship Summit', neither Chomolongma nor Sagarmatha."

We were not able to agree on that. He then said, "Because we are a poor country with little capital, we promote labour-intensive projects. You must have seen our dams and other construction projects. Would you like to see anything else?"

"I feel I have seen everything."

He said, "Chou En-Lai has briefed me about his discussions with you. We will help you."

We talked about this and that for about an hour and a half. That was the only time that I met Mao Tse Tung. He then called photographers over to take pictures. These were the few points we discussed: Mount Everest, the relationship between small and large states, and the need for an indigenous strategy in a country with a low capital base. I was very impressed with Mao Tse Tung, for he did not try to put pressure on me, though his behaviour was like that of an all-knowing intellectual. I was struck by his statement, "It was only after we got rid of the Russian influence that we managed to come to power."

I believe that Gandhi was a remarkable man, and I was completely bowled over by his personality. I will explain later my views on that. But what can I say about Mao Tse Tung's character on the basis of one meeting

of an hour and a half or so? The rumours circulating at that time, that he was ill and dying, were clearly false. He was dressed in loose-fitting clothes. His mind was absolutely sharp. When he was speaking about the tyranny of small states, I realised that there was no one there who dared speak up against him. The talk at that time was that he used to swim the Yang Tse river's entire breadth of five miles back and forth. I heard later that when people from our entourage emerged in Hong Kong they sold pictures to *Time* and other publications. That was how important our visit was considered. Others tried to quiz us about whether we had actually met with Mao Tse Tung and what his health was like.

I was not keen to return by plane, for I preferred rail. There is a town called Wuhan there, an important industrial centre by the Yang Tse River. They had built a famous bridge over the river at that point, which they considered an engineering feat. They had wanted me to see it so we had gone there. They suggested that I take a train from there for my return leg. What they provided turned out to be Mao Tse Tung's special train. I do not know if there is any other train as luxuriously appointed, although I know of the "Palace on Wheels" in India used by overseas tourists.

In Mao Tse Tung's train, back where there would be the guard's cabin, was a transparent hall with glass walls and roof. It had a library, a table for playing cards, a chessboard, and waiters serving tea. Also, a sofa and revolving chairs. One could just sit there and watch the unfolding landscape. Attached was the living room, and next to it my bedroom. There was a double-bed, a porcelain bathtub, as well as shower paraphernalia. Next door was the cabin for my daughter, and we had maid service. Further along was the cabin for my secretary. I had journalists and businessmen travelling with me, and everyone had a separate room, and a passageway connected all. The next railway car had my secretariat, and the third consisted of the dining car. Every car was served by hostesses, and the arrangement was like that of some five-star hotel.

In that grand manner, we travelled from Wuhan to Canton. A train which was earlier meant for emperors had been put in the service of Mao Tse Tung. When I had expressed an interest to go by rail, we had had to wait while they brought this special train over. The main reason to want to travel thus was so that we could see China's agricultural hinterland. I noticed that the train system of India was much better than that of China. In most place in China, there were only single tracks, whereas India has double tracks. Mine was a special train, which stopped only where it had to. I heard political sloganeering emerging from the ordinary passenger trains, even as they were moving.

As we were passing a village, I saw what seemed to be a huge notice board. When I asked someone to explain, this is what I learnt: Besides the commune's lands, peasants were allowed to keep small agricultural plots. They therefore had some vegetable patches, some chicken, and perhaps a cowshed attached to their houses. The tiny vegetable gardens were very productive. It turned out that the peasants were defecating on their own patches, and the large billboard I saw was exhorting them, "Let us not be selfish. Do not only defecate on your own patch. Also use the communal fields!"

The tradition there was similar to what they used to do earlier in Kathmandu: use night soil in the fields. Therefore, as soon as you leave Hong Kong and enter the agricultural region, one has cope with the stench. They use the two baskets balanced on the shoulder poles, just like our *kharpan* here. You could also see them carrying water containers in the *kharpan*s. That one billboard provided me an insight into the day-to-day reality of the land. I found that extremely educational, that a man will do anything for his own property. On that small plot, the peasant was allowed to keep a cow and do a few other things. We could see that such plots also had good crops of vegetable, which was not the case with the communal lands. Meanwhile, the communes were not able to satisfy the demands for food.

That was how my tour ended and we returned home. It was quite a successful sojourn, and I came away quite impressed. They had probably believed that we were completely biased towards India, and I believe we were able to change that view.

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In the middle of all this, I made some other decisions: the establishment of bilateral relations with Pakistan and with Israel. As far as Israel was concerned, the king was travelling when he read our announcement in the papers. He sent us a telegram saying, "Don't do it now," but we had already come out with our declaration and the process was on. We could hardly have reversed it, so I sent back a message saying as much. The king then sent another message, saying he would not agree. I believed that we already had a policy and procedure for establishing relations with countries, and, besides, it would not do to go back on our agreement.

When the king returned, he said to me, "I was not against establishing a relationship with Israel. I was planning to visit Egypt. After that

announcement, it became awkward, so I cancelled my Egypt programme and returned."

As far as establishing bilateral relations with Pakistan was concerned, we did not know how India might take to the idea. I therefore explained to Jawaharlalji what we were about to do. He said, "Yes, you must do that. It will not be good for you if you establish relations with distant countries and ignore nearby Pakistan. And it would also look as if we were pressuring you from forging links with Pakistan. You should go ahead."

I do not know what he might have told others, but that was what Jawaharlalji told me, and it was very thoughtful of him. "We would otherwise be blamed for not allowing you to build that relationship. And it would not do for Nepal to have ties only with faraway African countries," that was Jawaharlalji's reaction. We made our decision after checking with him, but some people in India did not like it.

Those two decisions, regarding Israel and Pakistan, are noteworthy as far as the establishment of foreign relations is concerned. It could be said that we were also demonstrating our independence, and India did not seem opposed, nor did Jawaharlalji give even a hint of dissatisfaction. With countries, it was smooth.

My ideas on foreign policy are clearly expressed in the address I gave to the United Nations General Assembly. To those who want to know, that speech would provide information on the important aspects of my point of view on foreign affairs.

As far as my foreign policy was concerned, what I said during my trip to Delhi must be noted, as must what I said during my China visit when the friendship treaty was signed. Those statements represent my basic understanding of how Nepal should relate to its neighbours. One other result of my foreign policy was the Nepal visit of Chinese Prime Minister Chou En-Lai, who came upon my invitation. He arrived at a time when Sino-Indian relations had already deteriorated. He had come as soon as he received my invitation, and we received him grandly. Jawaharlalji had, of course, been here before that, and he had received an even greater welcome.

The Chinese premier's disposition greatly impressed the people here. He never spoke to me against India even though the two countries had their differences. We had a small border problem with China and there was the issue of Sagarmatha. We decided not to let the issue fester and formed a joint commission. Padam Bahadur Khatri joined the commission from our side, from their side I do not remember if they assigned a military man. Soon after that, I was removed. About Padam Bahadur Khatri, the

king had claimed that he was a political person and so should not be placed in the army. He was therefore taken out of the military and sent elsewhere.

There was a happy incident during the Chinese prime minister's Nepal visit. It was during a press conference he had given, which provided an interesting moment in my own prime ministerial stint. The press was gathered in the large hall of Singha Darbar at night because he was leaving the next day. I was also present. The place was packed, and the press corps included the foreign media. Facing them were Prime Minister Chou En-Lai, Chen Ye, and myself. I made the introductions and opened the press conference for questions.

Chou En-Lai started responding to the questions, and the Indian newsmen were asking tough ones. The Press Trust of India correspondent was trying to provoke Chou En-Lai with queries such as, "You have quarrels with everyone. Have you made peace with Nepal?" Chou En-Lai replied, "We do not have any big problem with Nepal. This is a small country, whereas we are such a large one. We are willing to agree to what Nepal suggests. Even if Nepal were to take a few hundred square miles of territory, it would not make a difference for us. We think our friendship with Nepal is more important than a little bit of territory falling on this side or the other."

When the PTI newsman persisted in asking another similar question, the premier replied, "I have already told you this is a matter between Nepal and China, and for us this is not a problem."

In order to lighten the atmosphere, I then said, "Excellency, what I understand is that you will not have a difficulty in agreeing to all our territorial demands."

When I said that, he banged the table with his hand and said, "I mean what I say! What difference does this make to us, an area of a few square miles? We will hand it over to you. I understand well what I am saying."

Chen Ye then arose and said, "This can bring no disturbance to the relationship between Nepal and China. Aren't you an Indian reporter? Which press are you representing?" Chen Ye was a rugged character, and he had become angry. That reporter, I think it was M.P. Tandon, looked a bit anxious after that outburst.

After Chou En-Lai banged the table and exclaimed, "I mean what I say!" a dozen newsmen scurried out of the room to send their telegrams. Kashi Nath had dozed off. With Chou En-Lai banging the table, he woke up to see so many people rushing out of the room. He decided that there had been an earthquake and that Singha Darbar would come crashing

down. Kashi Nath, too, fled with the press people.

Chou En-Lai's visit to Nepal was quite a success, and I was greatly touched by the feelings he shared in our meetings.

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I remember a few things from my visit to the United Nations. When a head of government visits, the treatment he receives can be very significant. That was an important session of the General Assembly, and many heads of government were there, with me representing Nepal.

Some incidents have attached themselves indelibly in my mind. One, was my discussion with Krushchev and his disposition, for I felt that he was going out of his way to establish a good rapport with me. In New York, the custom was for every diplomatic mission to give parties, and so several would be happening simultaneously. For that reason, the important representatives of large countries would not attend the parties of the smaller ones. There was a big crowd at the party given by Jawaharlalji, and Krushchev was also attending. Jawaharlalji could not come to the party I hosted. His defence minister, Krishna Menon, came, but he too excused himself quickly, saying he had another party to attend. However, Krushchev came at the beginning and stayed till the end. And with Krushchev there, it meant the entire diplomatic corps from East Europe, including Janos Kadar, Gomulka, and others. That was a great show of goodwill.

Once, I went to meet Krushchev at Fifth Avenue, where he was staying. He greeted me with great feeling and we spoke for about an hour, he with one other person at his side, and I with Rishikesh Shaha. Much of the talk was inconsequential as there were no problems between our countries. The Russians at that time were proposing a 'troika' model for the United Nations, saying that there should be three secretaries-general—one each representing the Western countries, the Eastern group, and the Third World. I did not find that proposal attractive, as I felt it would render the UN Secretariat ineffective. Whenever an important decision had to be taken, surely the three would pull in different directions.

My view coincided with that of the Western countries, and the other Third World countries also felt the same. However, the Russians were pressing their case, and it also came up in my talk with Krushchev. I expressed my point of view, and he responded sincerely. However, he began talking to Rishikesh Shaha, and then really barged into him,

shouting, "You speak for the Americans! I know it, you speak for the Americans!" I had to intervene and said, "No, he represents our government's viewpoint. He is our ambassador." After I said that, Krushchev became quiet. Later, Rishikesh Shaha said to me, "You defended me the way no other prime minister would have done. When he blew up, they would simply have kept quiet."

I told Krushchev, "You should also come to Nepal." He replied, "Vorishlov was just there. I will also come, there is nothing to stop me. I can get there easily from Tashkent. A true friend does not even have to be invited." He expressed friendship in those words. He was staying there on the sixth or seventh floor, and he came all the way down on the elevator to see me off. He did not have a jacket on, just a waistcoat. As soon as he came out on the street, the crowd on both sides of the street converged on him. He walked over to my limousine, and he was in a jolly mood. The cameramen had a field day, for normally he would walk quickly over to his limousine and head off. He waited there for a while, and continued talking with me through the window even after I was in my car. This was a significant gesture, a signal.

The other thing Krushchev did was to give a small party, in which there were only five of us from the Third World, including Jawaharlal Nehru, Nasser, Prince Norodom Sihanouk and the then crown prince of Morocco. He had his Eastern European team with him—Gomulka, Kadar and others. At that time, I feel, they had already begun to pay special attention to Nepal; otherwise there was no need to have included me in that small group. Prince Norodom Sihanouk, of course, was a king.

I remember when Prince Norodom Sihanouk came into the hall at the United Nations, Rishikesh Shaha turned to me and said, "I have told our king that if there has to be direct rule it should be like what he does." Prince Norodom Sihanouk was quite flamboyant. He spoke very clearly, and he also spoke a lot. The Cambodian problem had already begun to rear its head, which was why he was significant for Krushchev. The latter had also begun to pay attention to Nepal, although nothing significant happened in our case.

On a related matter, Krushchev has referred to me in his autobiography, although not by name. He writes that a bright young man had tried to convince him against espousing the troika proposition, and this is said with a hint of sarcasm. Ganesh Manji showed me the reference and said, "See, this must refer to you."

Professor Yadu Nath Khanal was present when my speech before the Assembly was being drafted. I said, "You all should prepare the draft and

give it to Rishikesh Shaha." I provided them with pointers on what to say, and later included my own perspective in the speech. Rishikesh Shaha had laid great stress on one point, which I later included. He had said, "Say something about the king. 'I bring you greetings from His Majesty...'" Now, there was no need for that, but I think I included that in my address. At another time, handing me a draft, Jawaharlalji said, "Here is a summary of my speech." At that time, the membership of several countries had been revoked, and he wanted me to refer to that in my own statement as well. I remember pencilling that point into a copy of my speech, which is why it will not be found in the prepared text.

I remember an incident from a couple of days after I arrived in New York. Jawaharlalji had arrived, and Menon was insisting that we go to greet him, which put me in a spot. Menon said, "He is your good friend, what's the difficulty in this? This is not a matter of protocol." However, I decided that the matter would indeed raise eyebrows, Nepal's prime minister going to welcome India's prime minister in New York. I did not go, and do not know what meaning they ascribed to that. To begin with, they should never have made that suggestion. That was how they used to try to push us, and that was always the reason for the tension between us—they just did not understand clean diplomacy.

I met some significant people in New York. It was when Dwight Eisenhower's presidency was coming to an end, around October, with the elections to be held in November. Kennedy was facing Nixon. I saw the first televised debate, the first time this had happened between presidential candidates in the United States. I then went to meet Eisenhower, who was staying in a suite at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. Christian Hunter was his secretary of state, he used to walk with a limp. His own son served as his private secretary, a major in the army. One thing Eisenhower said was, "I had a talk with your king when he came here. He was expressing some dissatisfaction with you. That is not good. We told the king that if there is any unhappiness, one has to make an effort to remove it. You too should make an effort, for Nepal will benefit only if you and the king come together. This is what we told the king as well." So, it seemed that the king had gone to the Americans and complained.

I was then invited by New York State's governor, Nelson Rockefeller, for a meal. He was a big industrialist, with interests in oil as well as banking. He, too, repeated the same refrain, about what the king had said. We, including Biswabandhu and Rishikesh Shaha, were all seated there outdoors in the lawn, and when I exclaimed how lovely the lake was he

asked me to walk over with him. As we did so, he too raised the matter of the king's complaint. According to Rockefeller, "I said that this was most unfortunate, and that you two should bury your differences."

After that, Rishikesh Shaha said to me, "I want to alert you to something. You should be careful about Tulsi Giri and Biswabandhu. The last time the king met me, he inquired how much he could trust Tulsi Giri and Biswabandhu." I feel that the king must have said something more to Rishikesh Shaha which he did not share with me. This is typical of Rishikesh Shaha: he never tells you everything. He lets on a bit, which can then be interpreted either way. He said, "I was distressed when the king said that, which is why I am telling you this. They have some sort of an understanding and are about to do something."

I had removed Tulsi Giri from the cabinet before going to attend the General Assembly, and once more I had courted trouble with the king. What happened was that Tulsi Giri had sent me a letter of resignation, and so I had removed him. I took that note to the king, who replied, "It is up to me to accept his resignation or oust him, not you."

I said, "That is the king's special prerogative."

"Let it be. I will not say more, but this procedure was wrong," was what he said, when I ousted Tulsi Giri.

A conference had been organised in Israel on "science and the developing society", and I had been invited. The event was organised by the university there, and I attended in my capacity as prime minister. I think I said some interesting things there, still relevant today. It has been included in my collection of speeches. I gave another address in Israel, at a meeting organised by the Labour Party. I was asked to speak as chief guest, and the general topic was socialism. I believe I expressed some new ideas there as well: "The social movement in the West has arrived at its last phase. Because all the scarcities which gave their society its ideals—which made it alert and provided it with a momentum—have already been eradicated. Thus, there are no more lofty ideals left in the West, and the youth have been left without beliefs to aspire for. You have to now try to reach for high ideals again by embracing the problems of the Third World as your own. We do have ideals remaining in the Third World and if you join forces with us, there will be yet another wave of idealism among you."

That was my point of view, in an address that lasted over an hour. An African leader spoke after me. Israel's Foreign Minister Moshe Serot, who had given the introductory speech, was an extremely impressive speaker. The hall was packed to capacity. After I was done,

they came up to me to say that they had liked my thoughts, and asked, "What should we do? How can we implement those ideas?" Later, they did send people here to discuss matters with me. I think they were beginning to rely on me for leadership of the socialist movement, for while socialists had already begun to lag behind elsewhere in Asia, in Nepal we were ahead.

I was given a reception by the prime minister of Israel, an outdoor dinner. I spoke after him. There was an Indian reporter present, Prem Bhatia, who later also became an ambassador. He stood up and said, "The question is being raised in India, 'Who after Nehru?' In my mind, I have been wondering what kind of prime minister we should have in our country. Today, I realise that the prime minister should be someone like him." I recall he praised me profusely, and said, "Today I see the kind of prime minister India should have."

I do feel that I was able to create quite an impression in the international arena. Perhaps that was because I would speak simply and without pretension. For example, I said there: "Speaking about societal issues, the movement here is already over. There is no energising element among you, and no guiding idealism. There are only debates over programmes, and very little difference exists between one political party and another. It is possible for you to reach for a clear shape of socialism only if you involve yourself with the problems of the Third World. Only then can you rediscover your ideals." This was an original idea that I shared with them.

Struck by what I had to say, the socialists in Germany and Austria sent representatives to meet me in Nepal. The ambassador of Pakistan had come here on a private visit, and he left after discussing what was to be done and how. The European socialists also came, wanting to know how they could help the socialists in the Third World in a non-governmental way.

These events I have related were from the international sphere. Within Nepal, we did not carry out any basic change in foreign policy, but we did make a few notable advances. One was the friendship with China, which did away with the over-abundance of talk about India's dominance over Nepal's affairs. We established bilateral relations with Pakistan, about which India had no objection, myself already having spoken to Jawaharlalji about it. We established relations with Israel, which was quite a bold thing to do.

Immediately thereafter, the ambassadors of six Arab countries came over from Delhi. The delegation was led by Ali Al-Feki, the ambassador of

Egypt, who travelled with his wife. He made his protest about the establishment of ties with Israel, but as soon as I presented my point of view, he said, "We are protesting in our official capacity. We know your line. We have a quarrel with Israel, which you do not." That was his suggestion in private. We got along well, and his wife found a lot in common with Sushila. We also spoke about personal matters, such as about birth control, how many children we had, and about birth control pills. She even left some pills for Sushila. We became very intimate. Later, I think he also became a minister. I liked him.

I developed a liking for quite a few of the people I met. At the United Nations in New York, I met many Arabs; with Israel I already had a good relationship. There was a diplomat from Saudi Arabia who used to give very long speeches. When I met him once in the lobby, I asked him, "What are you doing? No one is listening to your speech." He replied, "I am not talking to the people in the hall. I was speaking to the people in Saudi Arabia. My speech was meant for them." I liked talking about such things, and I realised that diplomacy suited my personality.

In one of the parties or events in New York, I met Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. I think he was the foreign minister then. Ayub Khan had stayed home, and had sent him instead as leader of the Pakistani delegation to the General Assembly. We had gone to a reception hosted by Jawaharlalji, and it was a bit crowded. Israel's Golda Meir was also present, she too must have been foreign minister. She came over to talk, and Bhutto also walked up. As we were not all acquainted, introductions had to be made. I noticed he was uncomfortable as I introduced Bhutto to Golda Meir. We sat at the same table.

I was planning to leave quickly, but Bhutto said, "Let's go out for a round." I said I was not keen to do that. He asked, "Where are you staying?" When I named the place, he said, "I will drop you off there. I know the place well." The two of us bade goodbye to Jawaharlalji and emerged from the place. We went to some place and had dinner together.

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There is something I forgot to say, going back to my stint as home minister. Crown Prince Mahendra's marriage was being discussed, and one evening he dropped in unannounced. My daughter had died that morning, she was just a baby. I was staying at Rangamaharaj, and about four or five of us had gone on foot to bury her. She was just so tiny; Tarini was carrying

her. Sushila was mourning. The lamps that evening were not very steady.

The crown prince arrived at such a time, without notice. A man came in to say that the crown prince was waiting downstairs. I remember that day well. I came down and asked him, "Your Highness, what brings you here without notice?"

He said, "I am about to resign as crown prince. I will become a commoner." He pulled out a long letter from an envelope and handed it to me. It was addressed to the king and indicated his intention to renounce royal status. I think the crown prince also has some kind of seal, and that letter had such a mark. I asked, "Why are you doing this?"

"There is someone I wish to marry, my sister-in-law. My father refuses to allow it." [*She was the crown prince's deceased wife's sister. Trans.*]

"But you should try to come to an understanding with your father. Why take such drastic action?"

He replied, "That's not all. He has found a girl, and says I must marry her. I am being asked to marry a girl he has chosen, and to ignore the person I like. I will become a commoner so that I can marry her."

I said, "But this is also a democratic right, and Your Highness should not have to abdicate on that count. I will say this to His Majesty."

"Please try and resolve this matter quickly," he said, and left.

A couple of days later, there was a party at the residence of Singha Shumshere, who had taken up responsibilities as foreign minister after the cabinet reshuffle. The party was at Singha Mahal, to mark his induction into the council of ministers. I went there hoping to meet King Tribhuvan. When I did, I said, "There is one important matter. The day before yesterday, His Highness the Crown Prince had come to me."

"What is it? Tell me," he said, and I asked to see him alone. We went out to a balcony to talk and the king's other two sons, Himalaya and Basundhara, also emerged. I told them what had happened, and the king said, "So, what's the problem? You could have told him that I will accept his resignation."

"But that is not proper, not allowing him to marry someone of his choice. It goes against democratic norms and my own beliefs."

The king responded, "He wants to marry into the Ranas, whereas I am saying that we must sever our relationship with them."

"How can a girl be rejected for the fact of being born into a particular clan? It was the Rana regime that was evil, not individual Ranas."

I presented the clear arguments of a democrat as we talked out there on the balcony. I then asked, "If you do accept the crown prince's resignation,

who will take his place?"

"Here, he will," the king said, pointing at Himalaya.

I said, "No, it will have to be Birendra." The present King Birendra was already born at that time, and I said, "He will be the king, not Himalaya."

King Tribhuvan had apparently not thought about that aspect, in fact, I believe no one had until that moment. Birendra was a young lad, who would have thought of him? I added, "There is one more thing. Apparently, Your Majesty is trying to foist some other girl on him, which only increases the pain beyond being unable to marry the person of one's choice."

My romanticism was also at play there. Edward VIII of England had abdicated the throne for the sake of Wallis Simpson. I had been affected by that episode, and I believed what had happened was wrongful. Besides, I did not think it proper to tar an entire clan for being Rana. I then proposed a way out to the king: "For five months, he should not insist on marriage. Let us keep everything on hold for six months. Your Majesty should not pressure the crown prince during this period either."

"Okay, you can tell him that," said the king, and when I went to him the crown prince was also agreeable: "If Father says it is to be six months, it is fine with me."

Not to me, but to others King Tribhuvan said, "This is what BP said, but mark my words this crown prince will make you all sob; he will make you weep. I know him, and he will make you weep." He did not say this to me, however. People tell me that another grudge that King Tribhuvan had against me had to do with that episode. For me, however, it was a matter of belief and not about liking or disliking something. So, people said that King Tribhuvan was hurt by my attitude with regard to Mahendra's marriage. He shared that with others.

There was another similar incident, from before my time as prime minister or home minister, when I was not in any position. This is a change of context. I was friendly with the youngest prince, Basundhara, and he had asked me over once. There was a hotel run by a Chinese Indian in Lazimpat, and Basundhara invited me there for a meal. I liked Chinese cuisine, and I went over. There was talk of his marrying an American girl; Basundhara's case was almost a repeat of that of his elder brother Mahendra's. Basundhara said, "His Majesty says I cannot marry her. He says if you want to marry her, you must become a commoner. So I am going to resign."

I said, "This is not good. The king is right."

I, too, did not take to this idea of marriage with a foreign girl. I said, "If

Your Highness is bent upon marriage, then you should be willing to abandon the prerogatives of royal status. What the king has said is correct. But why insist on marriage? She will be your spouse, she can live with you. You are already doing that in any case. At the same time, it will not look good to be a member of royalty and be living with a foreigner." Basundhara then said, "Okay, then, I will not marry."

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While prime minister, I had to take care of two flanks: one the government and the other the party. Besides being prime minister, I was also president of the Nepali Congress. I think I had the full support of Subarnaji. There were a few important things to be implemented, and one was land reform. Whenever the subject came up in the council of ministers, Subarnaji was always there, backing me to the full. However, Ram Narayan and Tulsi Giri would rise in opposition, acting as if they were spokesmen of the land-owning classes. "We cannot do this; we will lose our very base," is what they would say. Subarnaji would respond, "No, we should push this through vigorously."

This was an important subject, as well as quite a problem, and I think every member in parliament and in the party was concerned. Meanwhile, I knew very well that Biswabandhu would rabble-rouse wherever and whenever it suited his interest. Ganesh Manji himself was not a great supporter of land reform, because this Valley of his would be affected. On the other hand, our member from Bhatgaon, Jagannath, was fully for land reform. Ganesh Manji used to distinguish between large landlords and small landlords, and insist that the former be finished off while the latter be left alone. We used to debate the matter, and Jagannath would say, "Whether it is a small thorn or a large thorn, it still hurts."

For one thing, Ganesh Manji and others had been unhappy when we gave the election ticket to Jagannath. Their view was that we had one other person in Bhatgaon who should have got it, he was either the president or secretary there. I had noted that that whole area was made up of the *kaanth*, the Valley hinterland, and it had quite a few powerful people, including, I think, Ganesh Bahadur Khatri. He still wields a lot of influence. We could not rely on only a group from Bhaktapur town to provide support. Besides, the town would produce other people as well, and there were the communists there.

For these reasons, I had insisted that the ticket be given to Jagannath.

Ganesh Manji's wife, Mangalaji, stood against him, which made it difficult for me. She started to quarrel with me, bringing her Women's Organisation members to my house. I said, "Look here, this is improper. Besides, he has already got the ticket. You should take back your nomination papers. If not, I will make Ganesh Manji himself speak there, against you, and you are sure to lose." I spoke rather sternly and later she did take back her papers. I was being pressured to provide the ticket to someone else, and it was because of this that Jagannath's relationship with Ganesh Manji soured.

Biswabandhu, meanwhile, would provoke people, making negative comments all the time. The chief whip's role is to guide members in their voting, but he would instead incite people and lead them wayward. However, we had 75 members there, and I was meeting all of them. Whenever I entered the parliament building, I would take a quick look around and call people over during the breaks. Everyone would come and crowd around, but Biswabandhu's efforts were nevertheless on.

Then there was Tulsi Giri, continuously trying to turn me against King Mahendra. "The king said this. You have to look strong; you have to reply," he would say. He was trying to set me up against the king. Tulsi Giri went and addressed a couple of meetings in Biratnagar and Saptari. He attacked me viciously in Biratnagar, saying, "He has become a coward, he is finished, he has surrendered." Thuldaju also began to attack me. He was a nominated member of parliament, and a member of the party's Working Committee. He started writing one article after another, calling for direct rule by the king, saying that the government had become corrupt. I faced these challenges from within my party.

Outside of the government structure, arrayed against me were the landowning classes and whatever powers the royal palace could bring to bear. India, too, I feel, was not inclined to give me too much comfort. I had a meeting of minds with Jawaharlalji but not the others. I was fighting all of them alone.

The Nepali Congress held a huge convention while I was prime minister, our seventh. There, it seemed as if Biswabandhu was giving a direct challenge to the government. Some discipline was also lacking among our members. The argument that the party president and the prime minister should not be the same person started making the rounds. Biswabandhu spoke on other matters as well, such as attacking our industrial policy. He was of the view that new industries should not be located in the hills or plains, but in the Inner Tarai, where, incidentally, he had property.

Biswabandhu's role at the convention was completely destructive, and he created a grave crisis. I was forced to speak up because it seemed as if the party's official position itself would be laid to waste. Biswabandhu must have sensed that the ground had shifted after I took the floor, for he came near and asked for forgiveness. Then he had the gall to tell the gathering, "I have taken back what I said upon his request." As if he were being very magnanimous, he said, "We must strengthen his hand." He created bedlam there, and of course you can always find 10 or 15 people who will join you when you do that. Fortunately, he was unable to touch anything within parliament, and he was unsuccessful with his agenda within the party. Saroj and others also spoke like him, and used extreme language.

That was one aspect of that convention. We organised a massive public rally and many meetings. Foreign delegates had come from Burma and from India. They were amazed to see such a huge turnout. In that sense, the event was a grand success, but this man did his best to ruin it.

Of course, there were others arrayed in opposition who said that I was ruining things. The communists would invariably show up at the gates of Singha Darbar and demonstrate, sometimes about *dalda* ghee, at other times raking up some other issue. About *dalda*, we had had an open discussion, and there was nothing secretive about it. We had discussed allowing *dalda* ghee into Nepal, and at the same time encouraging export of our indigenous *ghiu*. This was one suggestion as a way to lessen our trade imbalance with India. I had somewhat liked that idea. Somewhere there must have been a *dalda* lobby, and this must also have played a part. The communists started an outcry: "They are going to feed us *dalda* and kill us all. Nepalis will no longer be able to have our own pure *ghiu*..." and so on.

There was no danger from such sloganeering, however, because I had the situation well under control. Our international standing was good, and despite all efforts to pull down the party, the structure stood firm; for, if anyone started some talk, you could always expect someone else to come and report it so we could take counter-measures.

My hold on the parliament was strengthened when Bharat Shumshere, the leader of the opposition, came to me and said, "My 18 members will come out in your support if anyone tries to destabilise the House or to bring you down." And what I can say in all fairness about the communists is that they did say, "If parliament's work is obstructed, our four members will support you." In this manner—18 plus 4—I gained the strength of an

additional 22 members. Besides, our own party had 25 members beyond absolute majority. This fact, too, helped me confront the challenges. Even if someone left, it would not have made such a difference.

I feel that the royal palace had a hand in raising all these obstacles. Even if late King Mahendra was not involved, elements within the royal palace would have been active in backing Tulsi Giri and spurring him on to revolt. Meanwhile, the king grant audience to any delegation that came to see him, be they landowners or anyone else. They would then feel energised and come to me.

I remember once a delegation visited me following an audience with the king. I called them to the prime minister's residence. I met them in the large veranda out in the front. There were about 50 of them, and I told them, "You went to the wrong place by going to His Majesty. These laws are made by the legislature, and that's where you should have gone." That's how I put it, and I added, "You should have come to me and tried to convince me. After all, we are the people who draft the laws. Besides, you should know that I am only planning to wrest your land away from you, not to chop your heads off. If any other extremist group takes power, that is what they would do. You might have seen in this world, wherever there has been revolution and reform, they have not been content with taking the land, but heads have rolled. I am not trying to wrest away your property violently."

The law I had made called for a 25-*bigha* ceiling on land holdings, and there would be progressive taxation on anything above that limit. Thereafter, it would simply make no economic sense to keep too much land. Because of the anti-landholding tax, people would not be able to keep property over a certain limit. I told the delegation, "I have done this in order to protect you and your class. If you do not accept this, then the extremists will come and begin to extract a rather high tax from you."

They had no answer to that. I had called them over for discussions, and I felt that they returned satisfied. However, the king was provoking them. There were reporters present at that meeting, and I think they may have printed the news of what was discussed there. That was a very significant encounter. That was one of the groups which was giving me trouble, and it went away satisfied. I had reason to believe that the king would not collaborate with anyone to do anything drastic.

I used to get information time and again about the king saying irresponsible things. To begin with, as already noted, he took a full month, a month-and-a-half, to declare me prime minister. On the day after the swearing-in, he had said that I could visit him any time after simply making a phone call. I had to go twice a week, and they used to call me. When I went to meet him the first time after the swearing-in, I was kept waiting. They said the king was not yet in. What they were doing, in fact, was arranging to tape my conversation with the king, and they were setting it up. It was most inappropriate to tape my talks with the king.

My swearing-in was done outdoors in something like a pavilion. Because it was our first official meeting, the king had made grand arrangements. At that time, my guard was a police officer and he was watching all the activity from the car. He saw the military people running around, pulling wires and connecting them. He came to me and said that they were taping everything I was saying.

And on the king's table was a small tape-recorder with a clock on it. Whenever I went to meet him, he would play with it, switching it on and off. I used to think that that was something to tape with. I believe all my conversations with him were taped, and they should still be in the royal palace. Other than when there was no electricity, I think everything was taped. In particular, all that was said in the king's office would have been taped. This may not have been possible with conversations at parties, on the rooftop, or when I met him in Pokhara, but all official meetings would have been recorded. I think they must have used the tapes for matching and comparing. I felt that something was not right in all this.

I was extremely keen to keep the king on my side, but I was now a representative of the people, unlike in my earlier term in office. I was always alert to this fact—that the Nepali people rather than the royal palace formed my bedrock. I knew enough to want to maintain the king in good humour, but also believed that this could not be done by abandoning the people. I was ever conscious of this, but also knew full well that my relationship with the king was turning sour. I do not believe I had provided the king with any excuse to turn against me. I used to discuss any and every matter with him, including the bills that came up for passage in the legislature. For his part, the king himself never intervened, as I have already said. He would say, "This is your work. Do what you can to strengthen your position." However, it did seem to others that the king was always opposing me and the government.

I recall two incidents in particular while this was going on. Once, the king became a bit upset when I had visited Bombay to inaugurate a students' conference. At one meeting there, the students wished to pose some questions. It was at about ten in the morning, Mohammad Mohsin had introduced me before the gathering, and they started throwing difficult questions at me. Those present included Kamal Koirala, who did not know the meaning of the word courtesy and, who lacked seriousness. I said, "You might think that if power slips from my hands it will come to you. Do not be thus misled. If there is anyone that is waiting to wrest power, it is the feudals—the king."

I had not said this before the press, but it nevertheless reached the king's ears. I had used clear language, and said, "What is the condition of the country? You are young and you are communist, and I am telling you this: we are carrying out a great land reform programme and confronting fierce opposition because of that." I had said all that, and it all got to the king.

The other incident occurred during my return from the United States, when I spent a couple of days in London. Students came to meet me at the large Hotel Claridge's, where I was staying. Hemang Mani, the doctor, had come with ten or fifteen students, and the room was crowded with them. There, too, I stated, "I do not have a problem with radicals. I have a problem with the king." And, indeed, the king was creating obstacles for me. So I told the students that radicals made no impression on me. What I said there also got to the king. He told me later, "You said that I was a problem."

I remember those two events well, one in Bombay and the other in London, in both cases speaking before students. I had said, "There is an element which is creating problems, sometimes in the name of students, sometimes in the name of the peasants, or whatever. This only strengthens the reactionaries." I repeated that point in both places. "The king is promoting the rightist reactionaries, and their only objective in weakening me is to strengthen the king. Therefore, if I am supported within the system that we have right now, that can only strengthen the side that is pro-people."

That was the logic I used. However, I had believed that what I said there would not be made public and that it would not be picked up by the press. It was not said for general dissemination, but the king got the report, and he said, "I heard that you challenged me." I was getting information during that time that the king would do something drastic.

There was one other thing as well. During my Israel visit, I had been

presented with some Uzi sub-machine guns. I had asked them to send the guns over, and had not even returned to Nepal when the news was sensationalised in the Indian papers. The Indian press—and this is my personal belief—was putting the fear in the king that I was amassing weapons. India could hardly be expected to like that, for it was only India which had been providing arms to Nepal till then. I had just accepted a few of those guns, although the thought had indeed crossed my mind that perhaps there could be other sources as well. We had also been discussing some arms purchases.

The king was also made apprehensive by ambassadors and others here who told him that I was up to something. For better or for worse, the king became anxious, and he did not believe my protests to the contrary. And constantly, the palace people would come to me and ask, "Have the weapons arrived?" The same man Mohan Bikram, who was the king's military secretary of something, would come and make such enquiries. The day the arms arrived, he picked them all up and carted them away, leaving only the one that was meant for me, which had been packed in a separate box and had my name written on it. He took everything else.

Repeatedly, I would hear that the king was up to something. The question I asked myself was, what would he gain? The kind of analysis that I do today, I used to engage in back then as well. Besides, if he did act, there was simply nothing we could do about it. We would just have to tackle the situation as it arose. Ram Narayan always used to raise this matter, and once he brought it up in the cabinet. I replied, "If I leave because of the fear he will do something, that will only provide him with an excuse. He would say that he has taken over the government because the prime minister was not there. And we have no means to stop him or to respond to him. Therefore, we will just have to face what happens. We must be prepared. However, I fail to understand why the king would do something like that. He will only be acting against his own interests, allowing himself to be provoked by those around him."

I repeated this to Tulsi Giri after I was locked up. He had been paired with me in prison in order to ascertain my views. Meanwhile, Surya Babu was repeating the same refrain, that the king would carry out a coup, that he would do this or that. I asked him, "From where do you get such information?" He referred to an army general who he said had said so. I called the general and asked him, and he replied, "I have not met Surya Babu for the last six months." I felt that Surya Babu was just saying such things for effect.

Two or three days before I was arrested, Subarnaji came and said, "I have to go to Calcutta, please get me permission from the king. I have some income tax problems to resolve, and will be back in a couple of days." This was just two or three days before the royal action. Sushila, too, had left a couple of days earlier for Biratnagar. My tour towards the East was to begin from the second of Poush, and I was only waiting to attend a conference of the Tarun Dal. The entire programme for the eastern tour was already in place, with tents and horses at the ready.

When Subarnaji came over to take his leave, saying, "Okay, I'm gone," I said, "Subarnaji, this is what I hear. Come, I will drop you off." Ganesh Manji and I sat there in my car, and Subarnaji joined us. We arrived at the airport, and the plane was an hour late in departing. Subarnaji and I had a serious talk. He said, "For sure, he will carry out a coup."

Apparently the king had already talked with Subarnaji, but he did not share this with me there. "He will stage a coup, but not now because Queen Elizabeth is about to visit." I do not know whether he was speaking the truth, but Subarnaji said, "He will not carry out a coup and set up a dictatorship just when the head of state of a democratic country is about to arrive. However, he will surely stage a coup after March. For that, we have some time, and we will have to come up with a strategy. We can discuss it when I come back in two to four days." Saying that, he left.

I think I had a row with the king the day Subarnaji left. That same night, the king had called me over and demanded, "Why did you get us implicated, why did you link me to this *jogi* affair?"

I said, "Your Majesty, it is not I, but the *jogi* who has tried to mire you. We have started proceedings against him."

"Why did you give a public statement even though he is still being charged?"

I replied, "The press asked me about it, and I had information from the government that the *jogi* had fomented some trouble. We caught him. He used to go around saying that he had orders from the king to revolt against this atheist prime minister and his government. He was also claiming that he had Your Majesty's red seal of authority." That was indeed what that *jogi* was doing, and I said as much to the king and reassured him that we were investigating. The king's main complaint was, "Without proof you gave such a statement and implicated us."

The king was away in England on a state visit during that affair. The Council of Royal Representatives was functioning here in his absence, with Himalaya as chairman. The king telephoned Himalaya and asked him to ask the prime minister why he had been implicated. Himalaya

called me, and I explained the case to him. I, too, was a member of the council.

King Mahendra said that my statement made it look as if he were involved. I explained to him all that had happened, and there we left the matter hanging. The king raised this matter two or three nights before he took the action against us. I had told him, "Your Majesty, I have not said anything without evidence." And he had challenged me, "What evidence?" When we arrested that jogi, we had found quite a few papers in his bag. He had just moved on after having instigated the Gorkha affair and had walked so quickly that he was caught only when he reached Jumla. The papers were confiscated from his shoulder bag, and the Home Ministry was examining them. I said, "He used to show a letter from Your Majesty's military secretary, as well as a *lalmohar* seal, and say that he had also been provided money."

"Is that the letter?" he asked, and I showed it to him. The amount of money mentioned was not large, but it was written there that the king had appreciated the jogi's good work. It went on to say something like the king would be pleased to provide more funds in future if it was required for the jogi's work. After reading the letter, the king turned to me and said, "Does this mean that I am not allowed to give any *daan* to a mendicant?"

The jogi had established a *karmabir mahamandal*. I explained my point of view at length: "The king certainly cannot give *daan*, particularly when it is done without considering an organisation's background and character. The king is not like any commoner, who can give to whoever he wishes. Ours is a different matter. A politician can give to whoever he wants, but he will have to pay later for his indiscretions. There will be no respect left for the throne if this kind of thing is done. A king must therefore be extremely careful before giving *daan*. In particular, you should never ever give *daan* to someone who is actively opposing the government."

That was exactly how I said it. The king said in reply, "In that case, Bishweshwar Babu, only one of us can remain. Either you run the country and I will stand aside. Or you leave it, and I will run the country."

I said, "That, too, is not acceptable to me. Because everyone is needed in this effort to overcome the problems of development and national construction. For this reason, I cannot accept the suggestion that I run the government without Your Majesty's help. At the same time, Your Majesty should not presume that you will be able to run the government without the help of the people and the people's representatives. We cannot progress by copying the old ways. The whole country must participate in the work of developing the country. I am representing the people, and Your Majesty

is the king. The country cannot move ahead without the cooperation of the two."

Having heard me out, he said, "Okay, I can agree with that." He then extended a hand, and then he said, "Let's end today's discussion at this point. Please do not feel hurt with what I have said." I said, "I am Your Majesty's Prime Minister. Whatever Your Majesty has said outside, it has been an attack on our government. It may be indirect, but that is how it is seen."

"All I have done is expressed simple criticisms."

"Your Majesty cannot express simple criticisms if they come across as an attack against the government."

He replied, "Okay, then, if I make any further mistakes, you can come to this very room, take off your shoe and beat me with it. But please do maintain my dignity outside."

I said, "Your Majesty, if the prime minister makes mistakes, call him here and criticise him, but it does not do to criticise your own government from the open dais."

"Okay, then we are agreed. Let us work harmoniously," he said. The king then called the queen over and said, "Where are the presents and gifts we brought? Also, bring out what we brought for Sushilaji." There was a small leather suitcase, inside which was a stereo tape-recorder for me, some watches, a bracelet, and some earrings. The king said to Malla, the military secretary, "Have these put in the car." That was just two days before the first of Poush.

I remember one aspect of the king's conduct. Whenever he went visiting, he would ask, "What shall I bring you? What do you like?" I would reply, "Your Majesty, nothing special."

He said, "Still...in case I would like to bring you a memento or something? Others have asked me for a car. Shall I present you with a car?"

I said, "I would be unable to afford a car. As long as I am prime minister, I am provided with a vehicle, and when I am out of office, I would not be able to maintain one. I would have to sell it. Your Majesty presented Tanka Prasadji with a car, and he converted it into a taxi and then sold it. I do not want a car."

"Nevertheless, what shall I bring you as a gift?"

I said, "You can give me a work of art, or something like that. Or some music. I am interested in music and in art. Or a player." Stereophonic sound, the kind in which the whole environment is filled with music, was just coming into vogue. He had brought a set over and had kept it for so

long before gifting it to me. So, it was brought out, as were the watches and other things. He had brought nice watches for my friends and for Sushila. Handing them over to me, he said, "Others ask for cars and what not. You also take one." I had already explained my reasons for that.

Subarnaji had departed for Calcutta the day after my meeting with the king, and Sushila had left for Biratnagar. The morning of the third day after that meeting, rumours started flying about furiously. The air was thick with talk that the king was about to act. But Subarna had left me confident that the king would not move at this stage, and I had found his argument convincing.

Ram Narayan came panting, and said, "This is what I have heard. Do you know what's happening?" I told him, "There is nothing to do but to live through this phase. In any case, we must stand firm as the alternative force, no one can take that away from us. We must, therefore, remain here as the only alternative. If we flee, it will provide the perfect excuse for the king to say that he tried to make democracy work, but it was not possible, that the chief of government himself has run away. He could explain that that is why he took over the government."

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Early in the morning of the day of the king's action, I got a phone call from Bharat Shumshere, the leader of the opposition party. It must have been about 5 or 6 am. Shailaja was also there. "I would like to meet you. Shall I come over?" he asked over the phone.

"Do come, at around ten or eleven," I said.

"No, I would like to come right away," he said, and I called him over.

I was still in bed having tea when he arrived. He took the couch near the bed, and we talked. "Something very strange happened today," Bharat Shumshere reported. It turned out he had already received a signal, and only I seemed to be in the dark. I tried to analyse the situation as I had done before this: "What does the king need so badly that he feels he has to take such action? It is not in his interest." I believe this even today.

Bharat Shumshere did not tell me what signal he had had, all he said was: "Something very strange happened. For so many days I had asked for an audience with the king, saying that he should also give some time to the leader of the opposition and he had not obliged. Suddenly, I got a call last night asking that I present myself before His Majesty in the palace

at 3 pm today. I have to leave for Calcutta for a programme today at 11 am and have already bought my ticket."

I said, "So you can go to Calcutta tomorrow."

"The king will ask questions. He is, to my mind, a critic of the government."

"You, too, can criticise the government, say what you think is appropriate. But if he seeks your advice, you must tell him that this democratic institution we have, the parliamentary system, this should not be strangled. That, after all, is also in your interest."

"That, of course, I will put before him. I just wanted to know if there is anything else to say." Bharat Shumshere then left my house, but not before asking, "So then, shall I stay?" I said he should.

Perhaps he had wanted to get away, but he was reassured by me. He may also have decided that what he had heard was untrue. He stayed behind. At 3 pm, he was arrested at the Narayanhiti Palace gate. He had gone over at the appointed time, only to be seized.

Let me now provide some background to the affair that was to ensue. It seemed that the king had already had a discussion with Subarnaji. When Subarnaji had travelled with the king to Scotland and Paris, the king had said to him, "Will you help me if I take the government in my hands?"

Subarnaji had replied, "Your Majesty, that will be the wrong thing to do. If you disagree with the prime minister about something, then you must take up the matter with him. A coup will not be good for the country nor for Your Majesty. I cannot advise you on this matter."

When the king asked, "Will you join me?" he had replied, "This will not be good." The king had grown furious with Subarnaji and had told the people in his circle, "That man is completely under the influence of Bishweshwar. However, I will influence him through his rani." But Subarnaji did not budge from his position, that "this will not be good".

Subarnaji never told me this. He had only said, using high-born language, "He will act, but not now."

I had received a telegram from Rishikesh Shaha, saying that the king had called him to Paris, and asking whether he should go or not. It was considered strange that he sent that message, for why should he inform me? He was the ambassador, and if the king called him there was no question of him not going. Others thought it strange, but I did not, for I merely saw him fulfilling his duty to notify me as prime minister and foreign minister. I, therefore, did not find it surprising, but Surya Babu said, "This telegram holds a lot of meaning."

Rishikesh Shaha was also asked by the king, "Will you support me or not?" This he reported to me personally. He said he replied, "No, Your Majesty, this will not be good." He repeated what Subarnaji had said earlier.

"But I am going to do it. Will you support me or not?" the king had asked.

He replied, "If Your Majesty insists on going ahead, then I am your servant, your soldier. I will do whatever you ask me to. However, this will not be good." He said this to me later. The king told him, "I approached Subarnaji, and this is what he told me. I will influence him via his rani."

So Rishikesh Shaha knew that the king would stage a coup. What he also told me was that Tulsi Giri had a hand in having Subarnaji go to Calcutta. The king told Tulsi Giri, "Subarna is not going to support us." And so Subarnaji was allowed to leave after the king was told, "As long as BP is around, he will not side with Your Majesty. He cannot leave BP. If he is outside Nepal when the action is taken, perhaps he will then be willing to help." This is what I learnt later, though this information may or may not be correct. But it does sound logical; just as they say Ganesh Manji can never leave BP, they may have thought the same was the case with Subarnaji. But after they put me in jail, and after the whole affair was over, they said that Subarnaji was allowed to go because there was nothing he could have done.

Whatever the case, on that decisive day there was a thick fog hugging the ground till about 10 am. The delegates to the Tarun Dal convention straggled in late, so the meeting started only at about noontime. I had not eaten, thinking that I would have my meal afterwards. I inaugurated the meeting, and it went very well, with delegates having come from all over. One must look at the printed speech from that ceremony to understand my thinking and standpoint. I think it read very well. I do not know which speaker followed me, but Sri Bhadra Sharma had the floor when the military arrived and quickly surrounded us.

There was Surendra Bahadur Shah, who we had made the chief of general staff upon the king's urging and who later became the commander-in-chief; and Samar Raj Kunwar from the royal palace, whose lips I noticed were parched. They came in military uniform. My bodyguard was an army captain; he is a colonel now or he may have retired, and they removed his revolver. He was standing at a distance, and they asked him for his firearm and took it.

As soon as we saw them coming, Surya Babu said, "It is over." He then

turned to me and said, "Did you see that? They have seized your guard's pistol." Surya Prasad could actually have been the architect of that entire episode. Tulsi Giri knows more about all this than I do. Biswabandhu was like Surya Prasad's assistant, his co-conspirator. The military moved in with considerable force and surged towards the podium. The convention was taking place in a palace precinct and the podium was set against the palace platform, with the building forming the backdrop. They had to get up on the platform before coming to the podium, and they came from the back. Surendra Bahadur Shah stood at a distance, while Samar Raj came up, giving instructions. Surendra Bahadur Shah asked, "What do we do now? What next?" Samar Raj indicated, "Get him." Surendra Bahadur Shah then came up to me and said, "The king has given instructions, we had better go."

I responded, "Okay." Then, turning to the gathering, I said, "Please continue with the meeting. I am going. The king has called me."

Having said that, I was about to depart when Samar Raj pointed to everyone else on the dais, and said, "Him too... him too..." Officially, the royal palace was not involved in the action, because the person who asked me to move was the CGS. However, for the first 24 hours of that action, the entire country was in the control of the royal guards. Only the next day did the soldiers of the royal bodyguard withdraw from where I was jailed.

As they tried to take us away in that manner, the peace was wrecked. I was worried that the harsh disposition of my captors would lead to some very bad reactions. The soldiers were exhibiting a brutal sensibility. At such a sensitive moment, I saw Surya Babu trying to provoke the audience with hand gestures. The audience could have been mowed down by the soldiers, and in trucks there were more at the ready, supported with a bren gun. Those who had come in had sten guns and rifles. If we had so much as reacted, they would certainly have killed me right away. What they would have said was that the crowd had caught me while I was trying to flee, and I had been killed. Therefore, I told the gathering, "Everyone please remain calm. For some reason, the king has called me. I do not know why."

That is what I said, but the meeting did not continue thereafter. I think around 300 jawans must have come there to arrest us. Driving to Singha Darbar from there, you could see the royal military bodyguards all along the way. As we entered the Singha Darbar gates, I saw Chutra Bahadur. I do not know if Dan Gambhir Singh Rayamajhi was there. I saw other officers as well on the way to Singha Darbar, within its gates, and where

I was kept. We were all taken to the billiards room there, and after half an hour everyone else was taken away, leaving me alone. That room is quite large, and they had closed all the doors and windows and left only one door ajar, with two guards at the ready.

Things were a bit disorganised that day. The king had kept the conspiracy hidden in his heart, keeping others ignorant of his plan. Even if some had an inkling of it because of earlier discussions with him, the king had not pinpointed the date to anyone. That is what I think must have happened. It is a different matter if he had taken Samar Raj into confidence. I do think the king had consulted no one, and certainly not the CGS. Surendra Bahadur Shah. He had taken the commander-in-chief into confidence and no one else. Therefore, when Samar Raj was asked where we were to be kept, they must have been told, "Use the billiards room for now. We will make arrangements later." I do not think they even knew where the arrangements had been made for later on. Everything was completely ad hoc. All they had been told was to jail me and keep close guard over me. I also believe that the king was anxious that day on two counts: he was worried about the public's reaction, and he did not know whether we had arms.

We learnt from the newspapers that the king had gone for a walk on the grounds of the royal palace, and a guard had challenged him to identify himself. That was the kind of tense atmosphere prevailing at the time. The king himself was very disturbed. I was convinced that if we had had 50 Israeli Uzi sub-machine guns in our hands, there was just no way that the king would have dared to do what he did. I believe that even now. If 50 armed persons plan a coup here, even today, no one will have the nerve to repulse it. I firmly believe this to be true. That day, had we had some sub-machine guns in our hands, under no circumstances would the king have acted.

But we were not prepared with guns, nor would it have been appropriate. We had already entered the constitutional process, and I believed that such a strategy on our part would not have been appropriate for promoting peace. That action by the king has failed to deliver peace up to this day. In other words, it was not a sustainable action on his part. We felt this way back then, before the king's action, and had discussed the scenario and what else we could do. I had suggested to my colleagues there was nothing else to do but be prepared for some suffering. We were there to work at a different political level, but now we had to redirect ourselves and learn to cope with difficult times, with suffering.

I remember once the king had asked me, "Listen, Bishweshwar

Babu, do we have a plan for defending the city if some foreign force invades us?"

"It would be useless, Your Majesty."

"But, still, from the point of view of defence..." He had spoken in that vein. He must have discussed that matter with military people as well. I shared what the king had said with others and with the commander-in-chief. The latter was struck dumb, and said, "What kind of a question was that?" But a few days later he came with a plan, saying, "Yes, we have this contingency plan, with placements here at Tukucha, these guards here at the palace, and these are the key points." He must surely have made that plan that very day.

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And so they had us behind bars, and I myself was kept in solitary confinement. Later, in fact that very evening, Tulsi Giri came and said, "I told you that the king would do it, but you never listened. You saw me as your enemy. What shall we do now?" I replied, "What is there to be done? The king has made a grave mistake. He will jail us. How long will he keep us? Five years, ten years. We must remain here, because one thing is clear, that we are the alternative. This is not something that the king can handle."

"Come on, which politician looks beyond five or ten years?" he said.

I said, "Someone who cannot do that is not a politician. And I am a certain kind of politician. I look at this country's future. What kind of politician is it who does not look to his country's situation 25, 30, 50 years hence? And this king, he is even less of a politician in that sense. At the very least, a politician has to watch out for elections. I, therefore, have no worries. I am at peace here."

That's what I told Tulsi Giri, and he lamented, "Now we will be jailed for five years, maybe ten."

"What of it?" I asked. "We are ready to spend ten years behind bars. If he wants to release us, or if he is forced to let us out, there is no other choice before him but us." This is what I said to Tulsi Giri, who had come to find out what was on my mind. The very next day, he was removed.

After our arrest we were not given anything to eat. They finally brought a meal after we demanded food. That, too, showed that they were unprepared. They had only been instructed to arrest us, and the planning came later. They had feared exposing the plan if they had asked for a meal to be made ready. Everyone, other than the king and a couple of his closest

confidantes, was kept in the dark about the action. That was why we were not provided with food, and not because they were trying to make it difficult for us. The meal they finally delivered was good. If they had asked the hospitality people to have a meal ready, someone would have got wise.

The meal came at night. There were no clothes, nor beds. That also happened because they had not wanted to arouse suspicion by making arrangements. The king had the entire plan hidden within his breast. That is how he had organised the infamous First Poush Affair.

The next day, Tulsi Giri demanded of our jailers, "We need the king's speech." Obviously, the idea was to have me study it. We had been arrested at noontime and the king had made an announcement at three o'clock. Tulsi Giri shouted at the guards, "We have not seen the declaration! We want to study it!" He was exhibiting no fear whatsoever because, after all, he was in with the king in all this. The next day, unexpectedly, a newspaper arrived, and they let me read the king's declaration. Tulsi Giri had brought a book along, which was in fact my own book. After he was whisked away, the book stayed behind with me there.

I was truly stunned by the events, but there was nothing to be done but to settle down and try to be comfortable. It was extremely cold even though a strong fire was burning in the fireplace. They had brought a folding chair from the billiards room and placed it there. There was tea and other things. Our personal effects also arrived on the second day. The major who had searched us as we were brought in checked our belongings first. I had on a black overcoat, and he had searched that too as we came in. The next day, I think, they brought in Suryanath Das Yadav. I do not recall if they brought anyone else in after that.

From the following day, our meals started arriving from the Hospitality Department, and they were very good. In the morning, a proper English breakfast would arrive, and lunch was also of a kind. In the evening, we received tea, *supari*, *sounf* and cigarettes, which came by the carton. I do not know what their budget was, but whatever we ordered, we would get. Later they said, "You can get whatever you want to the tune of 45 rupees daily." That was quite a large amount back then. "You can get anything you want," they would say, and I would reply that what we had was more than adequate.

We had nothing to read and nothing to write with. There was a large coir mat on the floor of that billiards room, dirty with overuse. While having it cleaned, I discovered a pencil stub, which I quickly placed in my pocket before anyone noticed. On the second day, they arranged a camp cot for me, and a sleeping bag and quilts also arrived. Then a large rug

arrived from home, a piece of which is still with me. I placed that rug over the coir carpet, and used to practise *yogasan* on it. I used to lie down and write, with great difficulty, on paper towels and paper napkins. I used to pick up six or seven napkins at a time, although of course there was no limit on how many I could take. I think there must have been about half a *pau* of my writings in all, which I used to keep hidden under the bedding. I suspect they knew full well of this but preferred to look the other way.

We were not allowed to keep our own razors nor shave ourselves. Things were so ad hoc the day they brought us in that they did not even have toilets ready for us. On the second day, they dug a trench latrine and put a small tent over it. We had electricity all the time, and there were bright lights over the billiard table, and three or four other light fixtures, also quite bright. There were always three or four military personnel present, and the two guards at the doorway were a constant.

There was only that one door, and of course no question of going out. I asked, "Where do I go to urinate?" They brought a small receptacle meant for visitors to the billiards club. There was no light in the corner where it was placed, and so Suryanath Das Yadav toppled over that receptacle and banged into it many times. They did make that latrine for us the next day, but at nights they did not let us go out and we had to urinate in that container.

I have always had some difficulty when it comes to bowel movements, for my stomach is very sensitive. I do not fare well during unusual circumstances, and if that were not enough, they would raise both the front and back flaps of the tent while we used the toilet seat. Two persons would watch you while you were at it, which made it really impossible for me. They would place containers of warm and cold water there as soon as one entered the tent. There were five or six tents in line in the front. For nearly a week, I was not able to go to the toilet properly. Others also used the tent, and I found it a bit dirty and distasteful. Later, after they erected a special tent for me, at least that problem was solved.

Some interesting things happened in that place of incarceration, and I also got to understand how helpful people can be. The doctor who visited me was quite considerate and clever. I think he is still in the army. The majors and generals would all accompany him when he visited me. They would enter the big hall and give me a salute. The doctor would then come forward, and tell me in undertones what was happening outside, giving me the news. During my entire eight years in jail, the medical professionals were, to the last one, sympathetic towards me. This was true with each one who came, and I feel I must emphasise this

point. Even the military officers showed great respect in their personal capacities. Ganesh Manji does not agree with me on this, but I believe it. I also got a sense that they were not happy with the situation. Of course, occasionally we would get someone disagreeable, but that was my overall experience.

The general who was in charge of our confinement was named Shah. He was an absolute gentleman, showed a lot of compassion and was courteous. He even spoke to us occasionally. They were always fearful that some junior might tattle on them, and so no officer would come alone. He would bring along two or three assistants, a lieutenant, *subedar*, or someone of similar rank. When the doctor came, they would all arrive *en masse*.

I believed that they would not keep us in this undecided state at Singha Darbar. When coups are carried out, they also kill. Because they had created such an atmosphere of terror, I thought they would kill us. I was convinced of this that first day, when I saw them use the royal military bodyguard. That conviction waned somewhat the following day, but I was still wondering.

One day, I saw them set up a wooden scaffolding. It may have been part of a job to repair the outer wall of the Singha Darbar compound, but I thought that it was meant for our execution by firing squad. That, in a sense, indicates how tense we were. I thought that, given the context, it was not impossible that they might kill us. At that time, the king was acting very blindly. These are my feelings, and today the country is suffering from that act of his back then.

I just remembered something else. When the king called Rishikesh Shaha to Paris, the latter asked him, "Your Majesty, has the prime minister shown you disrespect?" The king replied, "No, he has not done anything against my honour, and has never acted against my privileges. I have no basis on which to remove him. However, I feel that the democratic process will not work." As I have written before, this is what Rishikesh Shaha told me. He had put the question to the king a couple of times, including after he became minister. The king told him, "I have no complaint with them. However, I have taken this action because I feel that the country can be run better. He has not attacked personal dignity, and I have no criticism of any of his political or other activities." Rishikesh Shaha had told me that he had put down this view of the king's in his records.

It was nine in the morning, on the sixth day of our jailing, and the heavy fog meant you could not see far. A general arrived, not General Shah, someone else, with whom I had an altercation in Sundarijal later

on. He came in, making a lot of noise, and shouting, "Okay, get the former prime minister outside." I was inside listening to him, and presumed that they were going to put me up before a firing squad. "Bring a chair outside," he was saying. There were two or three of us in there. The camp commandant came over and said, "You will have to go out, the general from the royal palace is here."

I got into my overcoat and emerged to see that they had put two chairs from the tennis court next to each other. With me was Suryanath Das Yadav and one other person. It might have been Prem Raj Angdambe; I cannot recall. Chairs had also been set up at the four corners of the tennis court. I was asked to sit on one, and the others also took their seats. Then the general arrived dramatically and announced, "I have come here upon the orders of His Majesty. I have a letter from the royal palace, which I will open in front of you." He was like a magician, pulling out an envelope from his pocket and showing it to me, "See, the seal is intact."

He then opened the envelope and read out the letter. There were questions in those cyclostyled sheets, and the answers were to be sent back to the palace. The general said, "You will now have to put down your answers," and handed us pens and paper. "Write," he said. "Can I keep a copy of this?" I asked, and he replied, "That's not in my orders. But you can make a copy, give it to me, and I will return it to you after it is okayed from His Majesty's side." I think I may still have a copy of that, either here or in Patna.

I was convinced that they were about to execute us, and it was under such a mental state that I wrote down the answers to those questions. Anyone would have understood our condition. The list of questions went like this:

Are you willing to live in Nepal following the laws of this country?

What do you have to say about the exercise carried out by His Majesty on 1 Poush?

What new kind of system should His Majesty now introduce?

Democracy needs some preparation. In that connection, what kind of preparation is required, in your opinion?

There was one other question, but it was unimportant.

Firstly, I replied that I was a citizen of Nepal and did wish to remain here as a citizen. I was willing to fulfil the duties of a citizen, but as a citizen I should also be able to enjoy some rights. The right and duties of a citizen went hand in hand. Secondly, His Majesty's exercise was quite unnecessary and ill-advised. Thirdly, as far as the future system was concerned, the one that was terminated on 1 Poush should be re-instated.

Fourthly, democracy needed no 'preparation'. The only thing required was that the person who had the power to end a democratic exercise must have faith in democracy—that was the only kind of 'preparation' necessary.

The language may have differed, but that is how I wrote down my reply, when I was still expecting an execution. I asked the others what they had put down. When I asked Suryanath, he replied, "I have written about being released. Do not ask anything more." And, indeed, he was released four or five days later, and we know what some of the others did, where they went.

That was one dramatic event, but the rest of the time in there it was quiet. The one problem we had was getting in touch with the outside world, for there seemed to be no way. Then the first contact we made was through the boy who brought us our meals. He was from the Hospitality Department, and had worked in my house earlier. He is in the United States now, has opened a restaurant and done other things. He was a neat young man with a lot of energy. He was always coming around, serving us tea or doing something else, and giving us the news in whispers. He would bring tea in the morning, and I would be seated on the folding chair in front of the fire. The general would also come, but he would stand at a distance. The young man would whisper, "They are bringing out a demonstration, planning something big. Today, so-and-so met with so-and-so," and so on. He would not really say much, and he would also exaggerate sometimes, saying, "They are thinking of bringing out processions from each and every household!"

I was wondering how to send information out. If I used the boy, they were bound to see me handing a letter to him. There were three or four persons who would come, light the stove and serve hot tea. I noticed one of them in particular; he is still working in the Hospitality Department. He is a good worker, and he comes here sometimes. One day, I saw a small shred of paper in the sugar, and got the idea of using this means to send a message. I would put a note in the sugar container and tell this person something like the sugar was dirty and to change it. He was very bright, and I had only to make the suggestion. Thus, my first contact with the outside world was through the medium of sugar.

One day, as we were eating, I found a ball of paper in the sugar. The sugar bowl ended up with Jaman Singh. "What is paper doing in the sugar?" he asked angrily, and threw the paper on the ground. The boy was scolded, "Why don't you bring clean sugar? Why does it have paper?" Fortunately, they did not find out. When I picked up that piece of paper

later, because it had already been dipped in tea, it was indecipherable.

When we began to send our clothes to be washed, I tried to establish contact by placing notes in with the drawstrings. I think they found out, for a military man came and asked me if I had any message to send. I used to send messages to Rosa in code. I used to write them in code even when I was using the sugar container. I had hope that it would get through when I used the drawstrings.

They started to provide us with some reading material, and the magazine *Dharmayug* arrived. Only one copy had arrived, and I read it day and night, focusing on each and every word. In the beginning, I saw nothing extraordinary in the magazine, but then I noticed that there was a message in there for me. I noticed that it was a message from Subarnaji. He asked, "What shall we do now? What is your directive? What is the order of our leader?"

That was all the message consisted of, and that was how Subarnaji got in touch. I replied, and the magazine had now to be returned. The system was to return the readings we got, and that is how the messages got passed. I wrote back, "Subarnaji has full authority to make his own decisions. I cannot say anything because I am in jail. Whatever he does, whichever line he takes, is acceptable to me. In these difficult times it is not necessary to take orders from me. Those friends remaining outside should work together."

After that, I do not know what happened to Subarnaji. India had felt that the king would set up a government that would be according to its own interests. It was for that reason that they had maintained silence. Later, however, there was something of an uproar. Here, too, there was a big uproar.

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As time went on, I came to realise that we would be behind bars indefinitely. We had no contact with anyone, and did not know what was going on outside. They had just begun to provide us with some reading material, but only books and no newspapers. Once, Dirgha Raj had used an opportunity to ask the king, "Can we provide Sandaju with books?" The king had replied, "Yes, he can have whatever books he wants to read." Then Dirgha Raj started sending me books, and that was also how I received *Dharmayug* as well. We were not, however, getting newspapers.

Surya Babu, who was kept at Baraf Baag with the others, used to receive

a lot of books and there would have been no problem if I could have had access to those. When I asked for them, at first he did not agree, but later he did. Surya Babu sent over a *Reader's Digest*, which I still have with me. In it, it was written, "God, protect me from my friends, I can take care of my enemies." He used to do irresponsible things like that. Surya Babu's attitude was like that. I would ask for serious reading, and he would send be stuff like that. He would do the same when I asked if there was any news.

The military people would try to help a bit, asking if I needed some books, or if they could provide some news. The day that Shailaja and others were arrested, at the 7 Falgun ceremony which the king was attending, the army men came running and reported excitedly, "Lots of people were arrested for showing the black flag. They were beating people up, including your niece. We saw them being beaten from afar." News like that would, of course, spread fast.

A barber used to come, and the general or other military officers would be standing nearby while he did his work. He would be whispering about this or that as he shaved my beard or cut my hair. He was the kind who could speak easily, and he would also say things like, "You have become thin." He spoke a mixture of Nepali and Hindi, but, I think he was from the army.

Before long, with contact established with the outside, I decided to begin a fast in protest. I sent word out, and put forth four or five main demands. One was that all of us political prisoners should be kept together and not scattered about as we were. I also demanded that we be provided with newspapers, that we be allowed to get exercise, that we be given the opportunity to meet our relations, and also that court proceedings be begun. My fast lasted 13 days, and for the first week or so they showed no reaction. During the period, off and on, I would get news from the outside through the contact mechanism I had established.

As my fast progressed, they acceded to all the demands except the one in which I asked that we be produced in court. I myself had not given that last one too much importance, for my emphasis at that time was that we be allowed to meet our near and dear ones, and that those jailed should be kept together. After all, we were engaged in politics, and it was important that we have the same refrain.

They had agreed to most of my demands by the tenth day, but I extended it by two days in order to press the point that we be allowed to meet relatives. Sushila was in Biratnagar, and I had said that I would end the fast after she or someone from home arrived, and not with some military

officer or doctor offering me fruit juice. They had sent a message via the governor, but for some reason Sushila was late in coming. My sister Bunu had arrived from Delhi, but they told me that only two days later. That was how I extended my fast by two days for Sushila. But then they said, "Your sister has come; she can offer you juice." I agreed to that. Bunu arrived with some orange juice, and so my fast ended on the thirteenth day. The only thing they did not agree to was my clear demand that they start a court case against me. The main purpose of my fast was to get them to keep us together rather than separately.

When Jawaharlalji told the Indian parliament that I had ended my fast, his statement was said to have been received with applause. The MPs stood up and welcomed the news when Jawaharlalji stood up and announced, "We have just received word that B.P. Koirala has ended his fast." That was the immediate reaction to the news.

After Bunu arrived, I was able to meet her. The general present at that time was a tranquil sort, who would stay at a distance during visits. Bunu was the first person I met from the outside. Her husband was assigned to Delhi as second secretary at the Pakistani embassy there. Bunu reported everything to me, including how she had gone up to Jawaharlalji and said, "They will kill my brother like they killed Lumumba."

He had replied, "No, your country is not that barbarous. Your country is not an African state like the Congo." Bunu reported to me, "He showed me affection. Time and again he would send queries as to whether I had heard anything about you. The despatch man would come over to call me. I used to feel awkward because here I was, the spouse of a Pakistani diplomat, and the Indian prime minister would keep inviting me over to meet him. He kept reassuring me that everything would be all right, and he would ask me to pass on that message to everyone at home as well." Jawaharlalji's level of personal interest represented great moral support for me. Whatever may have been the objective, it was a source of great and reliable moral support for us prisoners who were so suddenly isolated.

As soon as I ended my fast, they began to allow letters as well as visits. Among those who came by were Thuldaju and his wife, my sister-in-law. Thuldaju had been nominated ambassador to the United States by the king. My sister-in-law told me, "Please put some sense into your elder brother. Here you are in jail, and he is all set to go as ambassador, the king's ambassador. This is hardly appropriate. Your brother is all set to go."

That general was there, hearing everything that she said: "Do stop him from going."

I said, "How can I stop him? This is something for him to think through himself. He should do whatever he thinks is proper."

Thuldaju said, "No, I have not made up my mind. I have some conditions." His conditions were that he would liaise directly with the royal palace and not the foreign ministry, and that he should be jointly accredited to the United Kingdom and United States." Apparently the king accepted both his conditions, and he departed. We did not meet again before he left, but when he visited that one time, Thuldaju had said, "Who says I have already accepted? She just does not know."

But my sister-in-law had said, "No, no, he has already decided to go. Only you can stop him. Please tell him right now not to go, and he will have to follow your advice."

I said, "That I cannot do. It is a matter of his free will. He can think for himself."

After that, Sushila and the others arrived. The visits became regular and there was no great tension after that. They allowed newspapers, and we were also allowed walks outside. They said, "There is no space for exercise here, but we are looking for a place; after we find one you will also have more space to walk about." Meanwhile, we were let into a football ground which stood to the east of the billiards house. I did my walks there, near the mounds used for target practice.

And then from 45 rupees they suddenly dropped our ration allowance to seven rupees a day. The soldiers would bring what we asked from that amount. I began to cook my own meals. From home, they sent me a nice kerosene stove, an English oven stove with two burners. I wrote to Sushila asking her to send me a cooking guide. That was carried by the newspapers: "Now he is learning to cook."

The newspapers attacked us forcefully after we were arrested, claiming that cash and jewellery had been recovered from our possession. Sushila's reaction to that was, "How low can the newsmen get?" The editor of *The Motherland*, Manindra I think it was, had gone to meet her and had reported how emotionally she had said that.

I then became busy preparing my own food. There is a kind of cooker, underneath which if you keep burning charcoal the food kept in containers on top is nicely cooked by the steam. One cannot deep fry, but one can take the stuff out and fry it like vegetable. I started receiving cookery books, and I read quite a few of them. My habit while reading, and I read serious books, is to write notes. I do not read too many novels, and those that I like tend to be heavy ones. At that time, I began reading creative novels and stories, model stories which introduce a new style or

begin a new genre. I began to enjoy such readings.

I remember something else. After the 1 Poush exercise by the king, Sushila, who happened to be in Biratnagar, sent instructions to Rosa that she should return all the presents we had received from the queen and the king while in government. Among them were many gifts that I had received as prime minister during my visits. Those were not even mine, strictly speaking, even though some former prime ministers tend to retain them. I had decorated the prime minister's residence with all those gifts, expecting that the next prime minister would safeguard them. Also, I had sent many items to the museum.

And so, Sushila ordered that everything that remained be returned, in particular the jewellery. Rosa sent it all to the royal palace. They took everything in, but said, "The gifts given by the queen to Sushilaji need not be returned." When she heard that, Sushila sent another message, "Send those too, for they were given to me as wife of the prime minister. With the prime minister behind bars, we should not keep those either. If they will not receive it, throw it in front of the Narayanhiti Royal Palace and come away." They came and took away those gifts as well, once they heard Sushila's instructions to throw them at the gates if they were not received. I rather liked that expression of sentiment from Sushila. She had written to Rosa, "They are showing such malign disregard—return all those items."

I need not repeat that, at that time, all of us brothers had been jailed. A couple of months after the arrest, we were all taken to Sundarijal. They had informed us earlier that a new jail was being constructed in Sundarijal. The general also used to say, "The preparations are underway." However, he and the others would not say where it was going to be although of course they knew. "What's the rush? It is somewhere, and the place is being made ready," was his stock answer. This was the time when the books were travelling to and fro.

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One evening, an officer came and said, "You had better get ready, we're taking you today." I asked him why we could not do it during the day. "No, we will take you now, in the evening," he said, and I was taken away. When I arrived in Sundarijal, our people were already there, and it was like a crowd. It was already dusk by the time I was brought into one of the houses within the Sundarijal compound. The place looked all right,

and the camp commandant came up to me and said, "You can take your pick of the rooms."

I took one where Ganesh Manji stayed later. The camp commandant said, "There is a nice room for you facing south and east. That is the one we had readied for you, but if you do not like that, this should be fine." They themselves suggested that I take that room, which was the best one there, with a southeast front. And then the porters arrived, bringing my rug and bedroll, which they put in together with the bedding provided by the government. The most significant item in that room was the bedstead, which covered half the room, and that large rug of mine covered the other half.

It was very comfortable. I was tired. My friends were around. There were ten or fifteen of us gathered, quite an assembly. I slept early the day we got there, saying that we would meet the next day. Then life took on a normal routine.

At the jail in Sundarijal, the food was prepared outside the compound, and I did not understand the logic behind that. I used to play badminton. Bunu came and said, "Your American friend has sent a game, throwing rings on to a post." So we had that game, and then there was cards. We also began to study books.

With the kitchen outside, we used to hear the big cast iron gates creak open when the morning tea was brought in. Breakfast would come later in the same manner. We were all served by porters, who would take everything back after the meals. Lunch would arrive at 1 pm, evening tea at 4 pm, and dinner at 8 in the evening. That was the system. They did not let us cook when we asked for permission. Later, they began to be more lenient with me as my health deteriorated. I had my cooker, and there was no shortage of electricity there. Later, they seemed to find it a hassle to serve morning tea, so they allowed us permission to prepare it. A stove arrived and then other paraphernalia, and later I started cooking *daal-bhat* as well.

For one year in there, I was an avid reader. I ploughed through everything—serious books on history, philosophy, literature, and so on. My reading habit was reinstated, for I had been bookish earlier as well. I read Marx, and I read books on philosophy. I was helped along by the fact that I started receiving books with great ease from the American and British libraries. At the American Library, they had said, "Let us know of his selections, we will send them over." Many of the old books that they sent I was allowed to keep. All this happened through the medium of Ramesh Pandey, who has provided me with considerable support. Whatever his

intention, and even if he had been working in the interest of someone else, he helped me greatly then. He never let me want for books.

What I really liked was literature. The letters I used to write were also of a literary nature. The letters I wrote to Tarini and Shailaja while both were behind bars, I think, are notable. The authorities would allow letters to go out once a month. It was a strange rule, that we could receive letters at all times, but they could only go out on the second of the month. We could write as many letters as we wished, fifty if we liked, but they all would carry the same date. The letters that came in were all censored. They would register all incoming mail before distributing it. We knew this, for the camp commandant would come over and ask us to clarify some writing of ours. For instance, Sushila's handwriting is very poor, and once she had written 'nuptial bliss' with reference to marriage. The camp commandant came and asked the meaning of 'nuptial'. When I explained, he exclaimed, "Ah! She writes even better letters than you do!"

Indeed, the letters we received used to be of high calibre. Everyone in that jail was a person of some stature, each one having made some sacrifice. I believe that the more the suffering that comes from willing sacrifice, the more one is touched by greatness. I was all the more convinced about this during that time, when I studied the responses of my family members. Our entire family was scattered. I had written many letters to Shailaja, very valuable in retrospect, but they are lost. I used to write to Rosa as well, but more about family matters, somewhat witty. My letters to Shailaja had more of a philosophical bent.

This same Ramesh, too, has many of my letters. And there are many that Ramesh himself wrote. You know the kind to talk there is today, you see good in men, but are they really good? Why have you placed trust in me? Etcetera, etcetera. He used to write this kind of stuff and I would reply. In my exchange of letters with Shailaja, she would also ask questions, and write things like how we need a Gandhi in Nepal. She, too, was in jail. That is the kind of contact we had. I was a little agitated. I was always a little agitated in jail.

I remember some incidents of that period, including one about being allowed to meet friends and associates. While in Singha Darbar, we were allowed such visits, but in Sundarijal they said we might only meet relations. Friends were cut off, and that stricture remained in place for a few months. Since anyone could come claiming to be family, they restricted entry further to only those living in undivided households. This also prevented Thuldaju's family from coming. Later, they started saying only younger brothers can visit, and so Rosa could visit, but not my brothers.

Then, when Bunu came, they said only unmarried sisters were allowed. I said, "I do not have any sister who is unmarried. My brother's wife is not being allowed to see me, and neither is my married sister. Then who is it that I can meet?"

I was furious, demanding of them how they dared do that. At that very moment, I saw some of my relations arriving. There was this huge iron gate, and through a gap you could see the comings and goings. From my window, I could see the people on the road. I called the general over. There was a tree there, and I created quite a drama. That dialogue has even been printed in *Tarun*. The harsh general from earlier on had already departed, and this was a fine fellow, but one who tried to be more scrupulous than strictly necessary. Earlier, I had even arranged to have his son sent to Israel for training. The general was not a harmful person, but perhaps he was fearful for his promotion and felt the need to show strictness. I called for him and said, "Why aren't you letting me meet my sister-in-law?"

"That was an order. We are completely bound by the orders we receive."

I said, "Do you follow orders even when you know they are wrongful?"

"In the military, you cannot argue with orders. For us, what is legal or illegal is immaterial. We just follow the orders that come down."

"Does that mean you never have to think? Matters of law, the constitution? About morality?"

"Not for us."

While he argued, the commandant stood there with a major and a captain by his side. There is a huge camphor tree in there, and we were standing under it. I had planted quite a few of those trees, and sent out a few saplings as well. The one big tree was from earlier on, and the saplings emerged from its seeds, which I used to save and protect.

I continued my discussion with the camp commandant. We could see a village on the hill: "So, suppose an order comes for you to destroy that village and loot it. Will you do it?" I added, "You are ordered to rape the women there. Will you do it?"

"We will," he replied. I got very angry, "They will ask you to rape your daughter, will you?"

He became quiet. Then I said, "So it seems you do stop somewhere. You have not crossed all boundaries."

I also said, "See that major, he is licking his lips. It is clear he would rape your daughter if he got the order. But even he will not go beyond a certain point. There has been a trial in Nuremberg, have you heard about it?"

After that, the commandant replied, "Sir, I cannot argue with you." He saluted and left. That is how I laid out the matter before them. Even when we argued rather harshly, and when I said such things, I felt they still held me in high esteem. However, Ganesh Manji used to tell me, "No, that's only what you think." I do not know what the others thought, but one has to concede the point that the military men were very disciplined.

Ganesh Manji, in contrast, would say right to their faces, "Are these humans? Of course not, they are animals! Two-legged animals!" On such occasions, the general had every right to demand, "Please behave yourself!" But he never did. If we were doing something prohibited, such as trying to pass something through, the commandant would say that that would not do and would stop us. But I never experienced any inappropriate or crude behaviour, and felt they were always respectful. Ganesh Manji used to say that that was not true, that they did this and they did that. But what he said reflected only his personal opinion. I also feel that he was saying that partly as political propaganda. However, these are my personal views. They would probably have killed us if they had received the orders to do so, I am not saying that they would have held back. In such circumstances, they would not have shown any pity.

The major would be rotated every month, or was it every fortnight? As soon as the new major arrived, he would begin to assert his authority. The departing officer would introduce him to everyone, saying, "He has now come in my place." "B.P. Koirala," he would announce and bring the new officer into my room for introductions. The security arrangements would be explained to the new officer. There were towers on all sides of the compound, and they would climb up to them, although I never knew what they did up there.

Once, we got a major who really liked to push his weight around, some Rayamajhi. We used to play football, and sometimes the ball would bounce off towards the wall and I would go and collect it. Once, the sentry shouted from above, "Sir, it is not allowed to go near the wall. You have to stay three feet away."

"Upon whose orders?" I demanded.

The sentry replied, "The Majorsaheb's."

I replied, "Call the major here." He came, and I said, "Why do you make it difficult for us? Why can't we go till there? We have always done it. Our ball bounces over as we play. We will not agree with this prohibition."

He then gave some instructions, saying that we should not be hindered.

I remember one incident relating to discipline linked to Kisunji's

excitability. They normally made our purchases for us from what we saved from our ration allowance or from money sent by our families. Kisunji once asked for a pair of shoes from money that he had saved up. He was one who took great care of his belongings and clothes, even though looking at him you would not think so. Once, he had ordered a pair of shoes of a certain colour, and of a pointed or a rounded kind. He had already returned pairs that had been brought from the shops a few times. He was not getting what he wanted, sometimes the colour was not right, at other times he did not like the laces or the elastic grip. Kisunji was being unreasonable, I thought, for we were in jail and one could hardly go out and shop for oneself. And so the major said, "It seems impossible to find the right shoes for you." Thereafter, he acted as if he just did not hear him.

The major used to visit during mealtimes, and Kisunji grabbed the opportunity to demand, "Where are my shoes?" He used some expletives and the officer responded, "That's was not very nice."

"I was not shouting at you, but at your master," Kisunji said. The major said, "Even so, that was most unkind." That was all that the officer said by way of protest. He did not argue, but simply turned around and went away. Kisunji raised the matter again a couple of days later.

I used to eat separately, as my meals were cooked in my own room. The rest used to put their seven-rupee allowances together, and their food was good. The meals included meat and chicken. Later, as the prices went up, chicken was not possible every day, but it was still available on alternate days. We used to drink a lot of milk, good milk, which used to come from the neighbouring farmland. Kisunji used to come outside to wash up after the meal, with his glass of water in hand. He would bathe exactly half an hour before mealtime, and then meditate briefly, wearing a *dhoti* and a *bhoto* top. He would walk around before the food arrived, reciting *sloks*.

And so, as he emerged from his meal, a real brawl ensued. Coming out, I saw that Kisunji had splashed the *jutho* water from his glass on the major's face. The major had a *subedar* by his side who immediately reached for his pistol, but the major stopped him. While wiping his face with a handkerchief, he said, "That was very unkind of you." Then he said, "Let's go," and departed from the scene. I am trying to illustrate the kind of discipline they kept. The major could have responded by cuffing Kisunji. I do not know what the police would have done under similar circumstances, but there they showed the armyman's self-control.

Kisunji then came over to talk to me. He obviously felt that he had over-reacted. "What happened? Why did you do that?" I asked. He found it hard to explain, and, after all, we were all a bit agitated in there. He said

this happened and that happened and added (in Hindi), "I became angry and splashed water on him. Then I saw that man's hand going for his pistol. I lost my senses." I replied, "You were wrong to do that."

Kisunji has an unusual quality, and that is his ability to accept his mistakes. He did not say much that day, but he did concede that he had over-reacted. He said, "His hand went towards his pistol, and that really got me."

That was an incident about Kisunji. As far as Ganesh Manji is concerned, there has not been one occasion where he has had anything good to say about our jailers. He has never acknowledged their humanity. Now, I do not know whether I should say such personal things for the record—perhaps they should not be printed.

If I were to speak of my colleagues, Ganesh Manji was extremely disciplined. The schedule he set for himself would never vary, even by a minute. He would wake up at 5 am, make tea and without fail serve everyone in the rooms. Over eight years, he missed doing this no more than once or twice when he had the flu. He had calculated his daily routine by the second—after the morning meal, the time to be spent walking about, reading the newspapers, reading books, and whatever else. If his schedule called for turning in at 9 or 10 pm, he would yawn and wait around in the cold rather than go to bed earlier than that.

Once, Ganesh Manji said, "I will henceforth not sleep on bedding." He had received a bedroll from home, but no, he would not use it. On the floor, there was the thick straw mat, on which they had laid out a homespun woollen rug. He would shiver, but still insist on sleeping with nothing more than a locally-made blanket, and when it became too hard to bear he would wear thick socks and an overcoat under the covers. But Ganesh Manji never used the quilts or bedding that he had. I was amazed by his determination. He would refuse to sleep after meals. The rest of us liked to take a siesta, but Ganesh Manji would not sleep, nor would he let others doze off. Together with Yogendra Man Sherchan, he would read up on scientific matters. Yogendra Man may also have wanted a siesta, but no, as soon as the meal was over, Ganesh Manji would call on him!

Ganesh Manji would find it impossible to eat if even a tiny piece of stone was found in our rice. Saying that they were not sifting the rice properly, he took to doing it himself. He would be found lying on the ground sifting the rice. In that sense, he was an extraordinary person. I have never seen anyone else with his determination and ability to suffer physical discomfort. I, too, have suffered great discomfort, such as when I was jailed during Mohan Shumshere's time, but that was

involuntary. But here, in Sundarijal, we were not being forced, and yet once Ganesh Manji made up his mind on something there was no changing his mind. He would read if he said he would read. He must have read a thousand books, but on the other hand did not remember a single one. He would say, "What's this? It comes in one ear and out the other, it never stays!"

I told him, "How you will retain anything? You do not write, you do not talk, you only know how to listen." Yogendra Man Sherchan was teaching him about the stars. I remember a pleasant incident. Once, he was teaching Ganesh Manji about holography, laser beams and three-dimensional photography. I went in, as I sometimes did, and said (in Hindi), "What scientific topics are being discussed these days?" Ganesh Manji turned to me and replied, "There he comes now, the gentleman who neither makes his own house nor lets others build theirs. I am studying. He neither reads, nor writes. He is doomed, and now he has come to ruin me too." That's how funny he was. I said, "Look here, there is no way you will understand this. See, the man who is teaching you himself does not understand the topic." I had noticed that that was indeed the case. "I will explain it to you. I do read. Don't get into your head that I don't." So I made the concepts clear to them and then left the room. After that, Ganesh Manji apparently said, "B.P. Koirala is a massively intelligent man!" He said, and Sherchan too, that they had understood the matter only after I explained it. Yogendra Man was a voracious reader, very bright and very hard working. Once, when I asked him to tell me a bit about art, he first read up on it and then taught me the principles of modern art. But even he found that scientific topic difficult.

Once, I suggested that Yogendra Man and I jointly teach science. I said I would make it easier to understand the place of atoms and protons in the structure of the physical world. I also taught subjects like biology, and explained what DNA and RNA were. These were things I had known of for a long time, so I could explain them even better. I used to be impatient with the teaching they used, and suggested that we must aspire for higher levels. At which, Ganesh Manji would tell Yogendra Man, "You are not going to come to Koiralaji's room and teach. You should teach me alone." He attended the joint classes for just a few days.

Ganesh Manji used to read the newspapers from cover to cover. His other habit was to bathe very early in the morning. It was a strange routine, and he needed a full bathroom for himself. Fortunately we had two bathrooms, and so one bathroom was monopolised by him from 5 am till 9 am.

Kisunji was very bookish, but his bent was more towards spiritual readings, like the *Upanishad*. Once, it was decided that Kisunji would teach us the *Upanishad*, and we all gathered under that big camphor tree. I felt that Kisunji, too, would not be able to explain the basic issues that were necessary to understand and those sessions also did not last. Whatever we started got discontinued soon enough.

Kisunji and Ganesh Manji were not sporty. Once, Kisunji sprained his hand while playing, and he never came to the field after that. Ganesh Manji never played. I did, like the rest, and I was best at badminton.

That was how we were enjoying ourselves, but time and again we would feel disturbed, and occasionally there would be tension among us. A few times, we had arguments because of my conviction that we must maintain a medium of communication with the king. Ganesh Manji was absolutely opposed to that. He had his reasons, but I believed that he was not being politically astute.

For the first couple of years, we did nothing. After three or four years were gone, however, I felt that this lack of activity would not do. A message to this effect also came from Girija, Rudra Prasad Giri and Sri Bhadra Sharma, who were being kept over at Nakkhu Jail. They suggested that I take the lead and not stand back just because the rest did so.

There was some activity in those days, and Jayaprakashji had also come and gone. Amidst all this, in mid-1962, in June or July, the king sent over the British ambassador, with whom I had had a good relationship. His name was Scopes, and he had given a party a week or two before our arrest. So one day the general arrived, and it was not even the second of the month, which was when we were allowed visitors.

There was a small room where visitors were met, within the jail compound. It had a tin roof. I think that they had eavesdropping equipment fitted there. There were chairs set out in the room, which opened up as soon as you crossed the threshold

“A friends of yours has come to meet you,” the general said.

“Who is it?” I asked.

“I don’t know,” he replied.

I was dressed in pyjamas and a *khadi* vest, and went over just like that. It was Scopes who was waiting there. He said, “I am leaving tomorrow. My term is over. When I met the king yesterday, he gave me permission to see you after I told him that I could not go without meeting my friend.”

I said, “I thank you for this show of goodwill.”

He said, “Please understand that the king has not sent me to you. I have come on my own initiative. The country is in a perilous situation,

and you love your country. Why should there not be an understanding between the king and you?"

I said, "I am not opposed to an understanding. But here I am, in jail. I am not even told why I am placed here."

"The king thinks highly of you. Why don't you do one thing? Why don't you meet the king?"

It was interesting that the king had not yet handed down the new constitution. The Panchayat system had been established two years previously, and the lower level *panchayats* had already been formed, with the relevant legislation in place. However, a constitution still did not exist.

The ambassador said, "The king is in the mood to prepare a constitution. He is thinking about it. Why don't you help him? The king has already announced the Panchayat system, and he has his own ego. So, you can let him choose the name of the constitution, while you provide its substance. If you agree, I can meet the king and pass the message, even though I already took official leave yesterday. I can postpone my departure from Kathmandu."

I replied, "I may be able to accept your suggestion at a personal level, and I do accept it. There is nothing riding by a name. As Shakespeare has said, you may give the rose any name, its aroma remains the same. My interest is not in the name but in the substance. But the fact is that our party is presently engaged in a movement, an armed struggle. At present, I am only a prisoner. You are not talking to someone active in the party hierarchy. You should therefore give this suggestion to Subarnaji. You must convince Subarnaji, and I do not doubt he will agree."

"But the king will not talk to Subarnaji because he has raised the gun against him. He will not talk with him, only with you."

I said, "Fine, let him talk to me, and I will convince him about my point of view. In truth, I think I can bring Subarnaji around. He must be completely persuaded; otherwise, it will only be like a personal arrangement. The king has been helped by numerous people in their personal capacity, but I have to carry Subarnaji and the entire party with me on this. Besides, they have raised arms in revolt, and we should not forget that. The most important thing is that I would be able to bring them all in if I were to be released and allowed to address the entire group."

At that, the ambassador replied, "I do not think that he would agree to that."

I did not like the idea of ignoring Subarnaji and the entire group that he was leading, and making my own arrangements. It was also a matter of integrity, for Subarnaji had secretly sent a message asking me what

he was to do. I had sent a message in reply, "You are the one who is outside. I am agreeable to whatever you propose." I was therefore not warm to a plan which would isolate either of us. I felt the intention was a bit improper.

There was a problem at that time. The king was already under some pressure by that movement—a lot of pressure, I later found out. He was disturbed and inclined to seek a solution. Then came the Sino-Indian conflict. If it had not been for that, the king was getting to a point where he would have capitulated.

Perhaps a solution would have emerged if I had said at that point to the British ambassador, "Okay, I will speak to the king," and left jail. I do not know. Looking at the train of events thereafter, I think it was good that I did not. People do say that such and such would have happened if I had only agreed, but I do feel that after all that had happened, it was impossible to compromise. In a similar vein, many say about my departure for India after being released in 1968, "If you had stayed, they would not have arrested you." Jayaprakashji, too, was of that view. However, I am convinced that whatever has happened, has occurred in the natural course of events.

They kept me cut off from the people for eight long years before releasing me. Jayaprakashji had said, "You should have toured the country to try and re-establish contact with the people. All over, you would have got the same welcome you got in Biratnagar and elsewhere. The government would have had to give up. You should not have come to India."

Maybe that would have worked. On the other hand, what if the king had opted for a severe and oppressive reaction? Who knows what would have happened? The entire episode remains a question mark in my mind. Maybe my capabilities would have been even more weakened. They might have thought that they were dealing with me alone. And in the end, I did give the call for armed revolution, and we suffered grievously from that. I lost shining young people, such as Ram and Laxman, who would today be in the middle rung of leadership and providing me much-needed support at this time. Saroj was killed, although it cannot be said that he died during the process of armed struggle. However, their sacrifice has made a contribution even today, in terms of the public's receptivity towards our party.

And so, how would it look if we decided to wipe out all that sacrifice from our list? The very shape and dimension of our movement would become narrow. For seven years in India, I wrote and spoke in support of the path we had taken, and I did the same when I returned here, even in

the courts. The importance of what happened upon my return to Nepal itself would have been diluted if I had said anything different, I believe. Whatever the case, I refused to go along and immediately sent a message to Subarnaji, informing him of what had transpired.

I remember the day the British ambassador came, it was monsoon time, and the sun had just come out after some rain. Because it was the hot season, I was wearing only pyjamas and a vest. After that, in October, the Chinese attacked India. Jawaharlalji apparently said, "These Chinese are in a very bad mood. There is no saying what they will do. For this reason, you must stop your armed action." When he said that, Subarnaji and the others suspended the action and later called it off altogether.

That was a significant event during my jail term. A minister from that period, perhaps it was Rishikesh Shaha, told me later in Benaras that the king was greatly disturbed. The commander-in-chief had told the king, "Your Majesty must seek a political resolution, because the military option alone will not work. Our army has engagements on many fronts, and if they open another one it will be very difficult for us."

The king called a meeting of his council of ministers, where he said, "I will release B.P. Koirala, and develop an understanding with him." There were two who opposed that suggestion, Tulsi Giri and Biswa-bandhu, who said, "Please give us a few days, a fortnight." The Chinese invasion happened immediately after that, at which point the whole thing became moot.

The two may have felt that the problem would just go away. I do not believe that they were in touch with China, and I doubt that the Chinese would have advised them to hold off on a compromise because they were about to attack India. That is what I believe. They may simply have said that in the cabinet to prove their gallantry. Or it could have been part of their strategy, to use the couple of weeks to release a few statements and prepare the ground for any eventuality. However, the Chinese invaded, and after that the entire scenario was transformed. Later, they went about claiming that the king had halted his planned move because of them, and that otherwise the king had already been defeated.

In jail, we resumed our despondent life behind bars. We could not bring ourselves to read or write, and there were quarrels. Three or four years passed like that, and I think it was in the fifth year that I started receiving letters from Nakkhu Jail. Subarnaji, too, sent a message that I should now take the lead, that nothing was about to happen from outside the country. The Nakkhu inmates began to say that it made no sense just to waste away in jail.

When Surya Babu was released, I had expected some initiative from him. He was someone who understood what was going on, and talking to him you did feel that there was some substance, that he was not the sort who would get carried away. In Subarnaji's absence, I received that kind of companionship from Surya Babu. When he was jailed together with us, I had thought that we would have discussions at the political level. However, he remained aloof from us, and preferring to remain separate. He chose a room where arms and ammunition had been stored earlier; it had double doors.

We were kept in an L-shaped bungalow. The kitchen was in one corner, next to which was Yogendra Man Sherchan's room, opening towards the west. Then came Ganesh Manji's room, facing south and west. There was another room towards the west, after which came Surya Babu's room, with a north and south frontage. Next came the two toilets, and then one more room. After that was my room, opening towards the south and east; next to it was Ram Narayan's. Somehow, Surya Babu arranged to get that room where he was, and he would always spend time alone inside, constantly writing secretly. If we visited, he would hide the papers under his pillow.

Surya Babu was given to *puja* and meditation, although he tried hard not to give that impression. My feeling is that when you believe in God it should be a matter of pride. I doubt that God is pleased if you give the impression his worship is something to be hidden. However, Surya Babu would hide his worship, fearful that we would call him anti-modern and traditionalist. He would write all the time, I do not know what about. But I believe that he was sending messages outside. I do not even know who he was writing to, but I suspect it was to the royal palace. The instructions he had, I believe, were that in some way he should come out.

Occasionally, Surya Babu would weep. Ganesh Manji's room was next to his, and he would say so. However, I think it was all make-believe, for I do not think he was that weak a personality. His instructions must have been to do something to come out, even if it meant feigning a breakdown. At times when Surya Babu did come to talk to me, he would put on a brave face. He would say things like, "Our people are winning; I got information from the commander-in-chief; my brother Sharada himself got to see the telegram," and so on.

However, we never found out what Surya Babu was writing so secretly. The others, including Ganesh Manji, said that he must be writing reports. But I doubted that, for what was there to report about us? But he was always showing a wan face, which was all a put-on. Perhaps

India had directed him to get out of jail one way or the other. India was always promoting contradictory approaches I feel, one saying get close to the king, and the other encouraging opposition to him. For example, it was they who pushed Thuldaju along, while at the same time they also had Subarnaji and Surya Babu join me.

Surya Babu did exactly what he had to do in order to get a release, and he was out within two months. When their releases were announced, others used to come and meet me but he did not. We had noticed the gates being opened. A general or major had apparently come to tell him of his release, and he immediately got together his belongings and was gone just like that. I only got to see his back as he departed, when he was almost through the veranda. Overall, his role was extremely upsetting. Whatever he did after he emerged from jail, that of course had nothing to do with my government.

Another interesting aspect of that time in jail was Ganesh Manji's attitude. He was one who used to get carried away easily, and he was not at all politically astute. Kisunji, meanwhile, was spiritually inclined. I wondered who to consult on political matters. Once, I received a letter from Girija, saying that we had to do something and it was not enough to linger in jail. I shared this with Ganesh Manji, and he flared up. I mean, he shouted at me using uncivil language. He said something about spreading butter on you know what. He used those very words, and I asked him not to use strong language. Instead, I said that he should tell me what the advantages and disadvantages of the proposition were. But he was not one to do that. I asked the same question of Kisunji. I had written two letters to the king. When I wrote the first time, Kisunji had agreed with me on the need to send it. I had asked him to prepare a draft. He did, but it was not very weighty.

Once, the editor of *Naya Sandesh*, Ramesh Pandey, came. He arrived at night, and said, "Yesterday I had an audience with His Majesty, and I had asked for permission to meet B.P. Koirala. I said, 'BP, too, has a nationalist frame of mind. I do not think your views differ. I have been receiving his letters.' And so on. The king had said he had no objection." Ramesh Pandey then came to me and said, "The king has a high opinion of you and is trying to reach an understanding. He too is looking for a way out. You should meet him once. I would like to arrange this meeting at once, and for that you should write a letter to the king."

Kisunji did not object that much to the question of writing to the king, and said (in Hindi), "But the language should be proper." I replied (in Hindi), "Why don't you draft it?"

The others—Ram Narayan, Yogendra Man and the others who were there—would agree with me easily enough. And I had the letter to the king written despite Ganesh Manji's protests. When I showed the draft prepared by Kisunji to Ganesh Manji, he said, "Okay, you can send it." Kisunji had written, "In order to halt the deterioration of politics, I am given to understand that Your Majesty is also keen to meet me. I am therefore placing this petition before Your Majesty so that I be given an audience."

There was some request like that in that letter. I had felt that it was inappropriate to have the reference to the 'deterioration' of politics, and also to the king's desire to meet me. That was not the proper language, but I, too, okayed it and sent it on. We did not get a reply to that letter.

After that Ramesh came, or he wrote a letter, and said that that was not the kind of letter he had meant. I could just have asked for an audience, he said. "The part about the deterioration of politics and the king's desires were unnecessary. It was you who was to have shown the initiative for the meeting. The king was not expecting such a letter, and he could have talked only if it had looked like the initiative was from your side. That letter actually implies that the king had asked to see you. Anyway, what's done is done."

Another time, more than a year later, I wrote to the king myself. Kisunji objected to that letter, saying that he could not go by it. Kisunji used to say that I had made mistakes right at the beginning, that as prime minister I had shown an inability to understand that the king would take drastic action. Once, we had quite a debate, and he said something like, "This was exactly your understanding as prime minister as well!" As time went on, Kisunji became extremely anti-king.

At one point, I suggested to Kisunji that we write to the king once again. He replied (in Hindi), "A letter? By now we have done so much meditation and garnered so much *brahmashakti* that we will have the king bow at our feet. After all, we are Brahmans, and he will have to accede. If he will bow because we are Brahmans, he will be pardoned. If not, we have the power to turn him into ashes with our Brahmanic rays!"

Kisunji used to speak in that vein. Ganesh Manji, on the other hand, would say things like, "This is too weak. We will have sold ourselves." I would turn to Ram Narayan, who would give me full support. The same was true with Dewan. Yogendra Man would say, "The most important thing is our unity. You all must remain united. The letter is not that important."

I listened to no one, and wrote the note to the king. He replied to that one, and the general read the reply out to me. I was not able to keep the

letter. King Mahendra had written, "I am 'preserving' you," and so on.

This was the stuff of our daily lives in Sundarijal Jail. We used to debate and become all tensed up over small things. In my experience, the normal characteristics of people become exaggerated in jail. I have had quite a bit of experience behind bars, of course, both in Nepal and in India. People are never normal in jail, I noticed. In my case, I would become disturbed, and this would also affect my health. This would happen even though I would read and write more than the others, and I would be creatively engaged. It was not enough to read, so I would write as well. I penned stories, and wrote in other genres.

Mentally, I felt that I was able to remain more stable than the others. Kisunji became spiritually oriented, and that sustained him. Ganesh Manji had his own *hathayoga*. It was his one major activity, and he followed it scrupulously. When he wrote his letters, from the "Mangala Devi" at the top and including scathing references to "this king", the letter would be 6, 7, 8 pages long. We were allowed to send letters out once a month. He did not get letters from elsewhere. The one letter he would write a month, he would show me several times. He would study his draft, would not like elements in it, and then rewrite it. Often, even the full month would not be enough for his letter, so he would stay up till midnight saying that there was still time, and he would finally hand it over. Once, the king had mentioned one of Ganesh Manji's letters, which too had some accusatory language, to Tulsi Giri and Biswabandhu. They both told me about it. His letters used to be preserved. He would write at the top, "Mrs Mangala Devi" and would end at the bottom with, "Your well-wisher, Ganesh Man". Mangalaji might have been sick in bed, but there would be no reference to that.

Whatever it may have seemed, our group got along well. Jawaharlalji and the others did not spend more than two and a half years in the Ahmedabad Fort Jail, if I remember correctly. But the kind of tension they had there, with people not talking to each other, that did not happen with us. These things are mentioned in Jawaharlalji's letters and diaries from that time, which S. Gopal has printed in a series. They are printed as Jawaharlalji's letters written from Ahmedabad, and are available in eleven volumes. In the letters, Jawaharlalji has used harsh words against Gandhi. He has written, "That senile old man, he does not have a mind and has no sense of self-respect." As for Patel, the two exchanged curses, and did not talk to each other. Gandhi had already been released: it must be around 1943-44. Patel and Nehru did not talk to each other. Rajendra Babu was, of course, with me.

Going by Nehruji's letters, if there is someone I resemble even a little bit, it is Maulana Azad, who was a cultivated man. And there were equally strong accusations against Rajaji. I got the feeling that our Sundarijal Jail group was much more controlled and attached to each other than those at the Ahmedabad Fort Jail. We would have some strong debates, but it never got so bad that we would stop talking to each other. We were quite emotionally attached to each other.

Perhaps it is not possible to compare ourselves to the top Indian leaders, because they had a legacy of 60 years of struggle. However, among our own generation and those junior to us, I feel that while in Nepal we may have been behind in intellectual terms, we were shoulder to shoulder with the Indian leadership on the moral turf. This is my personal opinion. Even today, if you look back at my young team, no party in India had one that good. As Chandra Shekhar himself once said, "You have such a fine team."

That is how our days were spent in jail.

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In the midst of all this, Girija went on a hunger strike. He was subsequently released, and had a meeting with the king. Our own time of release had begun to near. The king and Girija had a good meeting, with the former saying, "I respect BP a lot, and I am willing to speak to him. You go and say this to him."

One day, Girija came to Sundarijal to meet me specially. As a rule, we were allowed meetings once a month, but he did not come on the scheduled day. He reported on his conversation with the king, and I said, "Fine, I too want meet him. It does not make any sense to keep us in jail like this. The country's situation has deteriorated, and I feel that the king, too, finds himself in a dark passage with no light up ahead. We, too, are in an unsettled state. I therefore think that we should indeed have a talk, but the meeting should be without preconditions. I will not demand any condition, for my part. If he is agreeable to this, then we should meet."

Girija reported my point of view to King Mahendra, who also said, "I shall not place pre-conditions either."

At this time very moment, though, India hatched a great conspiracy. It turns out that the king had said, "Do not repeat this plan to anyone." Later, the king told Girija, "You have betrayed me twice."

At that time, Surya Bahadur Thapa was prime minister. We did not

know it, but it seems he was in contact with Surya Babu and with India. It did not appear that the king did not trust the prime minister. Besides, those were the days when the prime minister was appointed directly by the king, not like today when you have to be elected before being appointed. Thus, no prime minister could be foisted on the king and Surya Bahadur was in his office because of the king's trust.

The prime minister was very keen to know what the king had discussed with Girija. Now, Girija is someone who moves around a bit, and Surya Bahadur was constantly pestering him about what was going on. Girija would reply, "Everything's fine, why do you ask? I met BP. Things are fine." Meanwhile, there were apparently anxious moments in Delhi. Perhaps there were instructions to find out if the king and BP had reached a compromise, and if so to seek ways to perhaps spoil it. The part played by Surya Prasad Upadhyaya in all of this was quite contemptible and treacherous. And, Surya Bahadur Thapa, too, played a similar role.

At one point, Girija stopped meeting all of them. He had had three or four audiences and come away greatly impressed with the king. I also heard that the king was impressed with Girija. Girija and I would talk alone for hours. Earlier, the generals would be present, but not then. I would share everything that transpired with Ganesh Manji. By that time only the two of us, Ganesh Manji and I, were left in Sundarijal Jail. While some of our other companions had been released, the rest had been transferred to other jails. Kisunji had been sent to Nakkhu.

In any case, the prime minister would send a car over to Girija as soon as he returned from the royal palace. He would say that he, too, was having a difficult time. Girija asked the king, "Tell me, the prime minister keeps asking me how things are going. Should I trust him?" The king replied, "You can tell the prime minister, but no one else." But the moment Girija shared his information with the prime minister, everything collapsed.

What happened was that, in the meantime, Jayaprakashji had told Girija, "You should also meet Vinoba Bhave. He is going to Raxaul on a foot march, why don't you go over and put your ideas before him. You must win his sympathy towards your cause. He is not a political person, and you should be able to win his moral support." Following Jayaprakashji's advice, Girija went to Raxaul to meet Vinoba. The Indian ambassador, Raj Bahadur, was also headed for Raxaul, and Girija met him while returning from his meeting with Vinoba, on the veranda of a bungalow there. Girija told him that he had just met with Vinoba Bhave. That was all he said, but later the king called Girija and rebuked him

roundly. After Girija explained, the king was a bit mollified.

What was happening was that the prime minister would pass some information to Surya Babu, who would relay it to the Indian embassy, and the Indian ambassador would then use his means to relate back to the king, that Girija had said this or that. And when asked where Girija had said it, Raj Bahadur would say, in Raxaul.

Once, the king asked Girija to take Surya Prasad along when he came to meet me. And so Surya Prasad did come over a couple of times and the same matter of an understanding came up. When he left after the first meeting, I told Ganesh Manji, "Now that Surya Babu has got involved, everything is ruined." Ganesh Manji did not respond then, but he told me later, "At that time, I disagreed with you totally. Here he was trying so hard to get our release, and you were saying that his arrival meant disaster." I remember, Ganesh Manji even got quite incensed with me at one time for having cast aspersions on Surya Babu.

Once, Girija came over with a letter from the Indian ambassador. He also had a typed slip from the king with some discussion points about land reform and so on. Girija was to take back my views on those topics. I said, "I will speak to him personally about these matters, and in good time." The king's point of view was, "If I talk to BP, it will be in this very room. I will call him, and sit with him in this very chamber. If we come to an agreement, then I will release him. Not only that, I will take his advice in my work. If we cannot agree, he will remain in jail."

At about that time, Girija's wife Sushma died of burns. Girija did not let the tragedy affect him, and was fully engaged in trying to arrange the talk between me and the king. Girija's role at that time was very significant. Ganesh Manji said, "I did not know that Girija was such an able negotiator. I had not expected him to be so politically astute."

On the matter of the Indian ambassador's letter, which was sealed, I told Girija, "Why did you bring it with you? He is not supposed to write a note to me, a prisoner. Return it." Girija replied, "What is the difficulty in reading it? Besides, I asked the king before I brought it over." I was satisfied with that and, truth be told, I, too, was curious to know what it contained. But my first instinct had been to ask Girija to return it. Afterwards, however, I opened it and read it. What was written there was: "Your friends are working to secure your release. Subarnaji has also taken some initiatives. You have implied that you do not support Subarnaji's line. It would help your friends to know what your attitude towards Subarnaji's statement is."

That was the time when Subarnaji had come out with his statement.

After having met the king and myself, Girija had gone and met Subarnaji in Calcutta. Based on the talks with the king, Subarnaji was to release a statement. Girija had drafted a statement of a kind which would have maintained our dignity. The king had apparently seen it and okayed it, saying, "Fine, you can show this to Subarnaji. I have no objection to it." Girija took it to Calcutta, and when he asked Subarnaji to accept it the latter asked for some time. Because this entailed waiting, Girija returned. Subarnaji may have gone to Delhi or whatever, but the statement he ultimately issued was such a watered-down version that it was even more advantageous to the king.

When Girija later went to talk to the king about the draft statement, the king replied, "I have now received a statement from Subarnaji which is even more suitable, so forget it." That statement by Subarnaji made it sound as if we had surrendered. According to it, as far as I can recall, we would agree with everything, including even the active leadership of the king. I think it also raised the fear of the communist threat, and there is reference to a step-by-step improvement of the existing system. Whatever, it was not a good statement. Girija will be able to say more on this. I have also written some things in my diary: that Girija came, that such and such discussions were held, that this and that happened, and so on.

It was when Girija brought Surya Babu along that I felt that everything was lost. After that, the next time Surya Babu came, it was to talk about a condition, my agreeing to the king's active leadership. But I had already told him that I was unwilling to meet if there were pre-conditions.

Once the king called Girija and Surya Babu together to meet him. When Girija got to the palace, Surya Babu was already there, waiting. The king first met with Girija, and then the two of them together. At that time, Girija scolded Surya Babu when the latter brought up the same matter of active leadership. The king asked Girija about the condition: "What did your brother BP say?"

Girija replied, "He says, 'I will meet only if it is without conditions. Otherwise I will not.'"

The king responded angrily, "I have kept him there for eight years, and can keep him there for eighty! If that is his position, then our talks have broken down. There is no need to confer any more. You can go tell your brother that!"

Girija felt quite troubled with that, alarmed because he knew that I was in poor health. He was wondering what to do. The king had told him, "You should also meet your brother once." To this, Girija had said, "What's

the use of meeting him now?" But Surya Babu had advised him, "This will be the last time. Go and tell him this much. At least, it will be an excuse to meet him."

Meanwhile, I had sat down and written a letter to Girija. I did not know that he would come, and was wondering how I would get the letter out to him. However, he arrived, and when I asked him why he had come, he replied, "Surya Babu told me to. I myself had thought there was no sense in coming."

I said to him then, "This is what I have to say. I have written a letter as well. It is long. Thank the Indian ambassador as well, and tell him that this is a matter between the king and us. Tell him that even if he takes sympathetic interest, this is a problem for which we have to seek our own solution. He should not be excessively interested in our problem. And, tell the king that we could not agree for these many reasons."

I had written that letter well and gave it to Girija. There were tears in his eyes as he said, "Now we will not be able to meet."

The king called Girija and asked him, "So what happened? What was your brother's reaction?"

Girija replied, "I have this letter, written to me."

The king asked, "Can I see it?" Girija handed him my letter, and the king read it over and over. Then he said, "Will you give it to me? I will copy it and return it to you." He then took it. It was that kind of letter.

Girija's dialogue with the king collapsed. Girija became frustrated and went to Jayaprakashji, who said, "Now BP's friends and relations must steel themselves. He could even die. He is being sacrificed for his country, for his ideals. We must be strong."

The situation had deteriorated that far.

Then, suddenly, Surya Babu arrived, with only Sushila by his side. I was surprised. Surya Babu said that the king had said that Sushilaji's persuasion would work. He trusted Sushilaji. Surya Babu had brought with him the typed draft of a statement, plus many copies of it. I read it. He was trying to correct it a bit, and I stopped him, "No, I can do whatever is necessary."

I corrected it a bit myself. Again, I may have been wrong to have done it, but I did it. That evening, the general came and took me to Chabel. When he came for me, I asked him where he was taking us but he would not divulge any information. I said, "At least let me put on my clothes." It was a cold day, perhaps it was October or November. I had my overcoat with me, so I put it on. But Ganesh Manji did not even have that; he went just as he was. And so the general brought Ganesh Manji and

me together to Chabel, where a huge crowd had gathered, including all the press people of the day.

When we got to Chabel, the general said, "We have to go to your brother's house."

I asked, "Where is that?"

"Why? Don't you know?"

I replied, "I have not seen it. It was not built back then."

He had not told me that I had been released, so I asked to see my release order. At that moment, the journalist Elizabeth Hawley came running along and asked, "Hello, Koirala, welcome home. What do you have to say?"

I said, "I will not give a statement until I am released."

It turned out that the general did not have an order for my release. He had only been asked to take me there, and leave me. And so there I was, seated in the jeep. I did not want to give the impression that I had been released after giving a statement. After I was released, I would be free to do as I pleased. For example, I could not have responded to Subarnaji's statement while in prison. After I was released, it would be up to me to welcome it or not. I believe what I did there was correct.

The general phoned someone or the other, and said, "You are now free."

Upon my release, I did make a statement. The policemen were stationed at a distance. The impression that had been created was that if the statement was 'bad', we would once more be taken in. I did not believe that, but Surya Babu and the others did. Surya Babu had brought over a statement, and the idea was that I would sign it. The press people were waiting. I sat down and prepared my own statement. Surya Babu had spread the word that it was he who had brought a prepared statement. If that had been the case, why would I sit down and take an hour to write it? The press people waited there for about an hour and a half. He had come with a prepared draft, which I rejected. I wrote my own draft and then had Surya Babu's secretary type it. That was a statement—prepared by myself.

During our release, there was a rather sharp exchange between Sushila and Ganesh Manji regarding issuing the statement. Sushila had said, "What's wrong with giving a statement?" She got agitated at what Ganesh Manji had to say, and declared, "I am not being a coward, and I will not claim that my husband has sacrificed more than you, but what is wrong with issuing this statement? Where does the question of your reputation come up?" Ganesh Manji replied, "If I give a statement now, the impression will be created that we were released for having made it." And he did not

issue a statement at that time, but waited till the next day. In it, he said, "I will follow what my leader says."

Whatever the case, Ganesh Manji was not taken back to jail for not having given a statement, which also proves the point that we were not going to be re-arrested for refusing to make statements. That was only a ploy by Surya Babu to bring us to our knees, to try and drag me low. The substantive part of the statement I gave there said, essentially, that I supported the declaration made by Subarnaji, who was a responsible and disciplined colleague. I kept some space for myself there, and also said some other things. I thanked my doctors, the military, and said that it was time for an understanding. I did not want to say that I did not support Subarnaji's statement, but that statement was not the basis of my release. Some said that that letter had been prepared in advance. Tribhuvan Nath of *The Times of India* filed a story which reported that Surya Babu had a significant hand in the conspiracies and played a behind-the-scenes role.

The king was scheduled to go to England for medical treatment the day after I was released. I, too, was to leave the day after. In the morning, seeking a meeting, I telephoned the king via the prime minister. That, too, was an error on my part, for it turned out that I should have phoned him directly.

In his talks with Girija, the king had set a condition. It went like this, "For a year after release, BP should remain silent. After that, I will follow everything he says. He should not do anything for a year." He did not want it to look like everything was going according to an agreement between us. When the dialogue with Girija collapsed, that condition too was out. After that, I was not bound by any pledge he had made to the king.

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After my release when I asked to meet the king, the prime minister sent a message saying, "The king says he is busy getting ready for his departure. He has to pack, and he is going for treatment. He will meet you upon his return."

The king departed the next day. Everyone had expected that I would go to see him off, but I did not go. I decided that if he was not keen to meet me, I should not go to the airport to make things difficult for him. But it turned out that the king had expected me there. Others told us so

later. The king had gone without fanfare, reserving eight seats on a commercial flight.

The day after my release, I met up with friends. The day after that, I left to go to Calcutta, where Subarnaji was. The plane to Calcutta had a stopover in Biratnagar, but I was not in a position to get off there. My health was not good, and it was important to go out of the country for treatment. I was going to be passing through Calcutta on my way to Bombay.

I could have miscalculated the political situation because of the size of the welcome I received in Biratnagar. It was a huge rally, at which they even raised some money for my treatment. The *pradhan pancha* of Biratnagar welcomed me in his official capacity, and he also helped raise funds. The aircraft's stopover there was for about 45 minutes, and we then flew on to Calcutta. I stayed in Calcutta for a few days, with all arrangements having been made by Subarnaji. I then went to Bombay, where too he had arranged for everything. He sent Sashi Shumshere along to look after me.

Many different groups welcomed me in Bombay. I was in the city for about a month, and Subarnaji had me stay in a hotel there, the Ritz. I was also in hospital for a few days. There was a minor operation, and they removed some nodule. I still have the scar. I also went to the cancer hospital, but the operation was done at the Breach Kandy Hospital. I recovered slowly.

Once in India, I met Jayaprakashji. I travelled around a lot, going to Maharashtra, Goa, Kolhapur, all over the place. When I was back in Bombay, the king, too, had arrived there. I went to welcome him at the airport. He had come on the Air India flight via Rome. I did not feel like going, but everyone suggested that I go do it. Going to receive him was a gesture from my side, but the king did not reciprocate. I had gone to the airport with Sushila, and the Indian government had made good arrangements. When the king deplaned, he was first greeted by the governor and then the chief minister. After that, it was Sushila and I. At first he pretended as if not to see me, and then turned around and said, "How are you?" I said, "Fine." He said, "I read in the papers that you had an operation." I replied, "I am fine now." He asked after Sushila, and she responded, "I am also fine." He had some more questions for Sushila. He then said, "Excuse me," and was gone. That was all.

After that, I made a telephone call at about ten. The military secretary came to the phone. The king was staying at a five-star hotel there called the Sun 'n' Sand. I said, "I would like to have an audience with the king." He replied, "I will tell His Majesty and let you know." And then a hour or

so later, he called back to say, "His Majesty says, 'BP has come here for treatment, and I am also here for some rest. Why meet here? We can meet later.'"

I did not like that at all, and the new scenario began to become clear. Having finished my treatment and other matters in Bombay, I went to Benaras and Patna. Everywhere, I received a warm welcome, from Nepalis and Indians, and in particular, from students. I spoke my mind wherever I went. The welcome in Patna was overwhelming, and from there I went to Biratnagar.

I went by train, and there had never been a larger crowd at Jogbani, and never a larger rally in Biratnagar. The people were very enthusiastic. We got in in the morning, at about nine or ten. Rishikesh Shaha was in the train with me. He said, "See, this is what a people's leader can command." He was not even able to get off the train; neither could Sushila. But I was carried away by the crowd. It was a big assembly.

We held a public meeting; the newspapers will have reported what I said there. I spoke on themes that remain important today. I did not refer to the communists. I said, "The king and people must meet. I want the king to stand where I stand. That is the kind of system we want." There was a strong reaction to that here in Kathmandu. They objected to my trying to equate myself with the king. I also said something else in that speech: "The affair of the year 1960 was meant to pull the king and his subjects apart. It is said that the change was good for the people, but how can it be good for the people when their rights have been wrested from them? This I cannot understand." I said of the constitution, "The text of the constitution is not that important. What is written there is not that significant, it is its intent that is important."

Interestingly, a sharp response was organised in Kathmandu against those speeches of mine. The papers voiced loud disapproval. I stated, "The country, the nation, is represented by the people, not the soil." I say that a little differently today. Back then, I used to say, "The nation is not the accumulation of rivers big and small. It is the people. If the people disappear due to some magic, there will be no Nepal here. A nation is not some geographical entity, it is a place which is loved and liked by the people." In response to that statement, Prime Minister Thapa said, "The nation does indeed mean mountains, rivers..." and so on. I think it must have been for the first and last time that he took the initiative, loudspeaker in hand, to call a meeting in Basantapur. I was not able to understand what was happening, why there was all this reaction. Today, finally, I have begun to understand. I had believed that it was the king who was

pushing this agenda, and not that some other forces were active.

I met my party workers and was impressed by their eagerness. I also sensed the enthusiasm of the people. I felt that the conditions were in our favour. I was finding myself unable to understand the king's reaction. I therefore sent Girija to Kathmandu, instructing him to try to make something out of it. The mistake Girija made was that he met the prime minister and not the king. The king did not give him an audience when he tried, so he met with the prime minister, who said, "The king is in a rage. How can your brother say such things? He is very angry. Your brother will surely be arrested again." That was the impression he conveyed, and Girija came rushing back in the belief that I would be sent back to jail.

Meanwhile, what I was seeing was the public's enthusiasm, its faith in us. Similarly, the party workers were trusting and eager. Under such circumstances, and with the king exhibiting such a negative attitude, I decided that it was not appropriate to go back to jail. Instead, this situation must be driven forward towards a revolutionary point, and for this reason I decided to leave Nepal. The decision to go to India was mine, entirely mine. Seeing the wave of enthusiasm sweeping the public, I did not want to watch it relapse into nothingness with my arrest. The public needed leadership, visible leadership, a leader remaining in visible contact. This was my principled belief.

Today, I feel that I erred in terms of understanding the situation. At the same time, though, if I had not gone to India, and if we had not overcome that situation, I do not believe we would have developed into this revolutionary stage. I wonder what we would have done had we remained here. We would have been just like Tanka Prasad, giving a statement here, saying something there. If everything else had remained constant, and if things had remained to our advantage, that decision could have been considered wrong. If I had known that the king was about to do something agreeable, it would have been a faulty decision. But, no, the king was taking a hard stance, in response to which I had the choice of either going to jail or joining the system.

It could be argued that it would have been better for me to return to jail. But if I had done that, this new dimension of my political life would not have been achieved. This is how I feel. I was able to show India that I was able to organise yet remain out of its control. Similarly, we were able to make decisions outside of the king's control.

I am always asked about this matter. But if we had not overcome that situation, and if we had not organised for seven years in India and led a

revolution without support from India, and in the absence of Subarnaji, our situation today would have been considerably weaker. We would merely have spent time in jail, which would have had no meaning. The way in which we returned from India had its own impact. If we had been jailed for those seven years and then released, the situation probably would have been no different from when we entered jail. But having gone to India, and returned after carrying out so many actions, I believe a new dimension was achieved. There was no other reason to go to India.

So, Girija came from Kathmandu by the morning flight. Immediately, we took a car and left that very afternoon. We arrived in Patna at night, and after a few days there we arrived in Benaras. After arriving in Benaras, of course, we made that mistake.

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I would like to recall two incidents which will help clarify the distinction that exists between the feudal character and the character of industrial-liberal bourgeoisie. We can see what differentiates the attitudes of the Soviet Union and China, with their feudal industrial character, and the United States and England with their industrial-liberal bourgeois character. While the Soviet Union is indeed an industrial state, its character remains feudal. In my experience, this distinction became clear from these two incidents.

During my time in office, the king went on state visits, once to the United States and another time to the United Kingdom. He had already visited the Soviet Union before I became prime minister. When he went to the US, the American ambassador had just been assigned to Nepal. Prior to that, there had been no resident ambassador in Kathmandu and the embassy in Delhi was also used to look after Nepal-related work. The embassy here was opened during my time.

The American ambassador did not know the formalities of the royal palace here. Tall and heavy-set, Ambassador Henry Stebbins had an engaging personality and I thought he was a good man. Douglas Heck, who had established the embassy and who later became ambassador, had also come. Heck was knowledgeable about the local ways, but Stebbins was absolutely new, unaware of the etiquette here, particularly as it related to the royal palace. There was a practice session required when an ambassador went to present his credentials to the king: how many steps to move forward, how not to show your back to the king as

you step away, to wear top-hat, coat-tails and striped trousers. Stebbins had none of these, and in the ill-fitting clothes he had borrowed from others he looked hilarious. He presented his credentials before the king in that attire.

The royal palace people were not helpful, even at my urging. The king was all set for his state visit to the US, and it was important for the ambassador to know where the king wanted to go and what he wanted to see. They could not just prepare the itinerary blindly. However, as there was no discussion whatsoever taking place, Stebbins asked me for help. I said, "It is best for you meet the king himself and fix the trip." At first, he was unable to get even an appointment with the king, but with great difficulty he finally got an audience.

And so the problems were resolved, but one remained. It had to do with President Eisenhower coming to the airport to greet the king upon arrival. Normally, Eisenhower would not go to the airport, instead he greeted heads of state right there on the White House lawn. There was a request made from our side, and I, too, added my bit, that for someone like a king it would be good to have the greeting ceremony at the airport. The ambassador reminded us that it was the cold season and that Eisenhower had already suffered a stroke. The welcome ceremony requires one to go without a cap on, which could make it hard for him. For that reason alone, and not wanting to show any disrespect, it would be appropriate to have the ceremony on the White House lawn.

That was what the ambassador said. I was trying not to interfere too much, so I said, "Explain this to the king. Your president has invited the king, and you are his representative here. You should consult with the king or other people in the royal palace." Apparently, they consulted, and in the end Eisenhower did go to the airport to receive the king. It was very cold, and he apparently did so with great difficulty. It was feared that he may have a stroke due to the cold, and later he did have one. Perhaps it was due to that exposure.

The other matter was about what to gift the king. The American president usually made a present to the visiting head of state, and the ambassador came to me for advice. I said, "You may have found it difficult to ask the king directly. Why didn't you ask the palace secretaries?"

"I did not do that. You will now have to advise me," he said.

"It is your decision, but as you may know the king received an Illyushin aircraft as a gift when he visited Russia. That may help you decide. Stebbins said, "We are not as rich as they when it comes to gift-giving."

In the end, they gave some simple but very artistic presents. So, these were examples of the kind of welcome and gifts an industrial-liberal bourgeoisie society would give. On the other hand, with lavish treatment and gifts, the Soviet Union was better able to impress the politicians and heads of states of developing countries. Western democracies cannot win in such a competition. The Soviet Union seeks to gain influence in difficult and hostile surroundings through such presents, whereas the Western democracies are not able to do this.

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Once I arrived in Benaras, I came to understand that there were two drawbacks to Subarnaji's taking up arms. Firstly, the action was completely dependent on India, and so it became a part of India's strategy vis-a-vis Nepal. My own view was that India needed us, too, and that since we were both dependent on each other, there was no need for us to rely so much on India. That was my own assessment. Secondly, I had the feeling that the public was full of revolutionary fervour, and if a small dedicated group of revolutionaries became active the people would be sure to give it overwhelming support. The people wanted change, but they were scared. A determined revolutionary—not terrorist—group would be able to assume leadership of the people.

I differentiate between terror and revolution, which is also the main point of difference between me and the Naxalites. For a people's revolution, the first blow must be struck by a revolutionary movement, after which the public also rises and participates. These were the two assessments I made upon arriving in Benaras. Having made the call for armed revolution, I needed some arms for about one to two thousand people. I had no wish to remain outside the country. Subarnaji stayed outside, and this was what had made him dependent on others. My conviction was that the government would not be able to stand up to us if we were able to raise arms and establish a base within the country. As for the international fallout of that action, perhaps I was not alert enough to that aspect at the time. In any case, this was how I felt.

Subsequently, I spoke to Indira Gandhi. In those seven years I spent in India, Indira Gandhi met me but just once. She was at the peak of her powers, having ousted all the old leaders of her party in 1968. When I met her, I said, "You will have to help me." She asked, "What kind of assistance do you mean?"

They showed me a lot of deference, giving me the treatment a former prime minister deserves. They made all the arrangements and treated me like a valued guest when I went to Delhi. Arrangements would be made for me and Sushila, and whoever might have come along with me. I told Indira Gandhi, "I need a crore rupees and some weapons." I added, "I see a mature situation for revolution in Nepal." In response, she said, "That is not a problem. You build your organisation; I will make arrangements for what you ask."

I believe that if a revolutionary is to conduct a revolution, then there should be no hesitation in raising money from any source. The only point is that the assistance should be provided without conditions. If support comes without conditions, it is okay to take it. I believed that because of Nepal's pro-Chinese and anti-India attitude, under certain circumstances it was possible to use India, the same way that in Russia Lenin used Germany. At that time, I even pointed out Lenin as an example and maintained that for revolution one could take assistance from any source. As I stated in many instances, according to the Hindu *shastra*, gold is pure, and if someone has become impure, he can be purified by sprinkling 'gold-water' on him. The important thing is the use the money is put to. Indira Gandhi did not place any condition upon her aid; she did not say that she expected anything. However, what she did tell me, was, "Do not speak to anyone else about this matter. Do not even talk to my ministers or to Kaw." That was the chief of RAW at the time, and Dinesh Singh was her foreign minister. While I had known T.N. Kaul for quite a long time, I did not know Kaw. Later, he came over, and we met many times thereafter. He used to come to me, or I used to go to him.

Thereafter, I went to England to meet the leaders of the Socialist International. Hans Janitschek was its secretary general. He had visited when I was in hospital in Bombay and had suggested that I come over to Europe. At that time, I had said, "I have a lot to talk to you about." I had to take help from them, as that would mean diversifying our sources of support, which would be good. And so I met with Janitschek, and what he said was: "I am the secretary general, an official or bureaucrat. What you suggest is something that governments can do. I will establish the contacts for you. You should tour the countries with socialist governments and talk to them."

During the course of that tour, I met the socialist leaders who were in power. For example, I went to Sweden and spoke to the leaders there, and did the same in Germany and England. They merely nodded their heads

and said, "yes" and "no". The Swedish leaders showed a little interest, but they had one problem: "How do we send you the assistance? We cannot do this without India's consent. And if that is the case, then India itself can provide you with what is required." That was the main thrust of their argument.

"India does support us," I assured them.

"In that case, there is no need for you to come to us for such a small sum," they said. Their logic was convincing. "However, we will give you all the diplomatic support you require."

After my tour, I went to London, where Hans said he had to meet me in private. At that time, Indira Gandhi, too, had claimed that her party was socialist, and she had applied for membership in the Socialist International. He said he wanted to discuss that with me as well as to learn who the socialists in India were. Also, there was one more important point to discuss with me, he said. This was 1970.

When we met, he asked me, "Will it be convenient for you if there is a revolt in Bangladesh and it becomes independent?" At that time, there had been no elections in what was then undivided Pakistan and no obvious crisis of any kind. The only sense I had was that some Bengalis were angry, and that there had been scattered calls for independence. There were slogans against the lack of progress and the neglect by the central government, and some talk of autonomy. I said, "It would suit us if there were a democratic movement there. The Pakistanis are against us. If there is such a movement, it will be to our advantage."

Hans Janitschek asked me that question. At that time, Yahya Khan was the president of Pakistan. Later, in March, an election was held there and there was fighting, after which Bangladesh was created. We then felt that perhaps they knew this would happen from the beginning, whereas we were in the dark because we did not know the background. Besides, this had not been a matter of focus for us.

While returning from my visit to the Continent and England, I met an important man from Israel at some airport. His name was Berect, and he met me in secret, in the airport's VIP room. I told him of my problems. He, too, said exactly the same thing, "We cannot help you without India's consent, and if India is in such a frame of mind, you do not need our help at all."

That is how my journey ended and I returned.

One day, Chakra came to me and said, "A weapons dealer has contacted me. He has given me some pistols, a dozen of so, and says he can supply us arms if we are able to pay him. They are of good Czech make." Chakra had accepted the delivery, but had yet to make payment for it. I had some money, and I asked him to clear the bill. It was from then that Chakra got involved.

So, when I returned from Europe, I found that there was a party ready to sell us arms. One of them was a white man, an American or German, whatever. We felt that they must be arms smugglers. If we had the money, they were willing to supply any weapon and in any quantity. Chakra, who had already been in touch with them, was staying at a place in Benaras where marijuana-smoking hippies also used to hang out. It was one of those hippie types, someone who used marijuana and also LSD, who had contacted Chakra. When I arrived, Girija said, "It seems we can get weapons here. They have already given us some revolvers and pistols. They left them at our house. The payment was to be made when you arrived." I was encouraged.

"I will deal with them directly," I said, and started doing so. That hippie-type person came over and I spoke to him. After that, he came and went regularly, and he told me a lot of things: "I can get you all the weapons you need. But you must pay the proper price. If you cannot pay everything right away, you can pay in instalments. But you must deposit a little now." I had collected some money, scraping it together from here and there. I think we went astray there a bit, and I think I made a mistake in my analysis. Later, I realised that he could not have been an international smuggler. He must have been someone's man, not the government's or someone's who would supply to anyone.

I asked him, "Where will you bring these weapons from?" He replied, "We have a large organisation headquartered in Germany. You can order Czechoslovakian weapons, or those from the East. We can also supply weapons from the West."

The revolver he had provided was a first-class Czech make. Today, I hear talk of terrorists, but he could have been given the weapons by the suppliers. He could also have been an Indian agent. Indeed, I have begun to believe that he may have been an Indian agent, perhaps someone from RAW. An agent from that agency had met me while I was in England.

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Let me say something about that trip to Europe. I needed a passport, and I asked for one on the basis of my ill health. It was true that I also had to have a health check-up, but there were also many people to meet. So I first sent an application to Nepal for a passport, and for my efforts I received a rather nasty reply. That has already been published. When all other efforts failed in getting a Nepali passport, I had written a personal letter to go with the application. The king was away, and the present king was then crown prince. I do not know why the crown prince thought fit to send me a reply like that. It said something like, "The kind of treatment you seek can be received in India itself." I felt that that it was in bad taste.

I had to go under any circumstance, so I asked for travel papers from the Indian government, according to international rules and the custom of providing such documentation to foreigners who have been refused a passport. It turned out that there was an identity card which foreigners could get, which was more than a travel document. I still have that identity card. On it was written that it was a 'special passport'.

However, I faced a lot of difficulty travelling with that card. For example, I had wanted to go to England also but could not. I first travelled to Germany, where Nepalis did not need visas and neither did Indians. Besides, Germany had a socialist government, and all my friends were in government. I was going on the invitation of the Socialist International. I went there because I decided that it would be easy to enter. But when I arrived in Frankfurt, they would not let me through. I said, "You are not even supposed to query me. Whichever way you look at it, you cannot stop me here because, firstly, I have brought proper travel papers from India. Secondly, it is also clear that I am a citizen of Nepal. In either case, you cannot detain me." Their reply was, "The problem is that you have not come on a Nepali passport, and you are not an Indian citizen. We cannot let you go on the basis of the Indian travel papers."

They kept me there all day. When I suggested, "Why don't you call the general secretary of the SDP Dingel", they said they could not do that. I then had them put a call through to Hans Janitschek in London. Hans then sent his assistant over, and I was finally allowed through on his personal guarantee. I then stayed there on a special week-long permit. They took me to Bonn in a taxi, where I stayed in a fine hotel as a guest of the SDP. I held talks with them. However, the seven-day permit was coming to an end. Where should I go? In Germany, they were unwilling to extend my stay, and they would not give me a visa to England, because the king

was there. The Socialist International was telephoning and sending telegrams everywhere, asking for permission on my behalf, but they were firm in their refusal.

Finally, a message came from them that I should apply for a visa at the Swedish embassy in Bonn. I handed in my application, in which I referred to the Swedish Socialist Party. My time in Germany was almost over: only a day was left. A reply came that it would be impossible to arrange a visa that quickly; it would take at least two days. Meanwhile, I had to leave Germany on the seventh day as my permit would run out at midnight. Then the Swedish party's secretary informed me, "Come without a visa. We will make some arrangement at the airport."

So I arrived in Stockholm without a visa. I was in a coat and tie, whereas they were expecting someone in ethnic attire, perhaps someone with Mongolian features. So they were unable to locate me and were a bit flustered. I asked around if someone had come to receive me, but no one had any information. It was only after all the passengers had departed and only I was left that they identified me. Much earlier, something similar had happened when I arrived in Israel, at the Tel Aviv airport.

The chief of the International Department of the Swedish Socialist Party had come to pick me up, and she deposited me in a hotel. During my talks with them, they repeated the same refrain, that they could not help us without India's assent, and that if India was agreeable then we did not need their help. "Without India's concurrence, we will not be able to help you on the matter of weapons," they said, and as we spoke about other matters I came to the conclusion that they were not very interested in Nepal. Their attention was focused more on the African continent, where there were more immediate dividends.

I realised that they might call themselves socialists or whatever, but these functionaries were satisfied with merely giving the impression of being committed and interested. In reality, and in terms of practical and concrete action, they were somewhere else. That is what I felt from that personal experience there in Sweden. When I told this to Hans Janitschek later, he agreed, saying, "That's true. There is great benefit in getting involved in Africa these days."

That was a practical consideration, nothing more. In the socialist party, they used to know, each member more than the next, about Black Africa even though the socialists had no organisational strength there. The African leaders they were supporting were not even heading socialist parties. I recall being a bit disheartened as these people did not appreciate the point of view I was espousing and were not extending support. They

might be my friends, but they would do nothing other than stay in the background and provide lip service.

In Sweden, too, I had permission to stay for no more than a week. Where was I to go now? The Socialist International has informed everyone about my travel plans. Then Denmark came through, saying, "You can come over." When I went there, I met a man whose name I think was Anderson, who later became the foreign minister and prime minister. He spoke with great understanding, and I felt that maybe he would support us. He was not in government at that time. He took me to their parliament, and we held a discussion with the parliamentary party. The Danes showed more empathy than the others, while I found the Germans in particular to be indifferent and formal.

My period in Denmark ran out as well, even though my hosts had said that I could stay as long as I wished. I remained there for about a week, and then tried for England but was refused. Then I heard from Belgium that there was no problem with a visa there, and I could stay as their guest as long as I needed to wait for permission to move on to England. They put me up in a hotel, and I stayed a full month in Belgium, which was the duration required for my British visa to come through. I felt acutely embarrassed, staying there at their expense even after my meetings with them were long over. However, I was able to establish contacts with many representatives at the International Labour Organisation there, as well as with Belgium's socialists, whom I had not known earlier. They were extremely helpful and kept me at that hotel.

After a month of waiting in Belgium, the British embassy finally sent a message saying, "Come to get your visa, it has been approved." I went to the embassy, and the ambassador called me to his office. I saw that he had received a telegram from Lord Hume directing that I be granted a visa. The reason for the long delay seemed to be that the king had been in England for an extended stay of more than a month, which was why they had found it difficult to process my application. It was only after the king left England that clearance came. The ambassador had me wait in his room and made sure I got the visa right there, and I left for London the next day. There, the atmosphere was like home, for I had friends in the Labour Party and there were the people at the Socialist International Secretariat. I also had personal friends. All of them extended me an open-hearted welcome.

I have provided all this background to describe how hard it is to travel in that manner. It was difficult because I was a well-known opposition figure, and all those countries had good relations with Nepal. As socialists, we in Nepal were at the forefront in Asia, and yet they found it difficult to

support us. They are now paying for the mistake they made back then.

I would like to add something more. When the Asian Socialist Conference was being held in Bombay, before our general elections, six countries in the region were holding polls, including Sri Lanka, Burma and Nepal. This was in the late 1950s, when India was also preparing for elections. We were all headed for the Elephanta Caves in a motor launch, and the discussion centred on the outcome of the elections. All the prominent socialists from Israel, Europe and Asia were gathered there, and I said, "In my analysis, the best possibility of electoral victory lies with us. We are the most likely to win among all of us."

The others were also making their claims that they would win, including the Indian socialists. "I do not think that the others have that much of a prospect," I maintained. In truth, we won in our elections and everyone else lost. Even the Burmese socialists lost. In India, they had no hope at all. If one speaks of investment—to use the businessman's jargon—then Nepal would have been a successful investment. But I began to feel that socialists were more keen on projecting their image than getting a grasp on political reality. They were unable to recognise the people who presented themselves for who they were and were not paying attention to those who genuinely needed support.

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When I returned to India, I saw that a group was ready to provide us with weapons. On the matter of payment, the supplier said not to worry: "You can pay me as we go along and as you raise funds." He then began to deliver the weapons, first pistols and then rifles as and when we asked for them. But we had no place to keep the weaponry, for we were not organised. An organisation was, of course, easily set up, but how would we handle the weaponry? There was that rundown house where I lived, which shook as you walked and flakes came off the walls. One side had already collapsed. Sushila and I used one room, a small one. The weapons were kept there in a crate, covered up with a blanket. There was no other way. That is what we did when the weapons started arriving.

That arms supplier told me two things: "You all are not hard-hearted enough to be revolutionaries. The king made a grave mistake by releasing you."

I asked, "What should the king have done."

He replied, "The king should have executed you. Now, if you get the opportunity you should assassinate the king. You have no alternative."

I said, "That is not the way of the democrat-revolutionary. Nothing will happen by finishing off an individual. We are not collecting weapons for a terrorist campaign. This is only to encourage a people's uprising. Ours is not a terrorist movement." The discussions I had with that man were quite thought provoking.

The challenge we faced was that of funds, with weapons arriving and people beginning to join up. What were we to do? I approached many people in Nepal, India and elsewhere, but the kind of money required was just not available. It was not a question of a few thousands, for it involved the purchase of arms. My goal was to get enough arms for three thousand fighters. I also needed space to house them and train them. I had a car, and I took it to the hills of Vindyanchal Mirzapur. In between Mirzapur and Madhya Pradesh, there is a tableland, which is where I went. I saw that the jungle there was intact, and that it would be possible to train fifty to a hundred fighters at a time there.

The war in Bangladesh began at that time, when I had the guns but our action had not yet started. India was not yet providing them assistance, so the Bangladesh revolutionaries came to me. The Bangladesh socialists, who went back to the days before Partition, introduced me to some of them, a few of whom are in high positions today. They asked me for some weapons, and also sought Jayaprakashji's help in persuading me. Through slow accumulation, I already had a truckload of arms ready. Jayaprakashji said to me, "They, Mujib's group, have the money but are finding it difficult to get arms. Some youths had come to me seeking assistance. Please help them get some weapons if you can. They will pay. Why don't you also put them in touch with those who are providing you with arms, so that they can be supplied directly as well? They are simply finding it difficult to pay you here, but they have hundreds of lakhs of pounds collected in the London banks. They will be able to pay."

That arms supplier, the German or whatever he was, came to me. He would always be with a different woman, sometimes Indian, sometimes European. When I suggested that he supply arms to the Bangladeshis, he said, "No, you concentrate on your revolution. We cannot be responsible for supplying everyone, everywhere." I should have understood then, and become properly alerted. For if he were only an arms merchant, he should have agreed to sell weapons to anyone for cash. But he said, "I won't do it," and didn't.

Thereafter, Jayaprakashji said, "Why don't you give them what you

have?" The Bangladeshis, too, came and implored me, "Please help us if you do not need those weapons right now. We will pay, of course."

Finally, I relented and said, "Okay." A truck arrived at night and took the arms away. At that time, there was no question of India halting the consignment, for they, too, perhaps wanted the transfer to happen. From Benaras, that load of arms went to Patna, where it was transferred to another truck headed for the border at Purnea. There is a point where Purnea, West Bengal and Bangladesh come together.

Babu (Sudhir), Sushil and Chakra had gone to hand over the arms. When they arrived at the border, they were greeted by a crowd of young people. Our people used to say that it seemed like some kind of party, and the Bangladeshis were all staring awestruck at the guns. But by the next day they were moving about on motorbikes with the guns slung over their shoulders. Young boys, no more than 18 or 19, with revolvers by their side, some of them became 'commanders', others something else. They had no training whatsoever, and did not even know how to use a rifle.

They asked us to send an instructor. With us, we had Colonel Rai, who later died of cancer. He stayed with them for a long time, and sent us a message saying that the Bangladeshis seemed bent on suicide. Colonel Rai said, "They are planning to fight such a well-organised army with these rifles, and they walk about openly. They do not even consider an underground revolution, they say they will not fight, and they act as if Pakistan does not have an army. The situation here, however, is ideal for an underground movement."

That was the message Colonel Rai sent us. During the Second World War, with two armies entrenched against each other, guerilla warfare played a secondary role. You could have open warfare then. But that was hardly the way to fight here, especially without the help of the Indian Army.

Apparently, there was a huge military cantonment near the border, where a river separated the two sides. They would go in and attack at night, as it looked like the Pakistani side was not effective after dark. That was because the surrounding peasantry was against them. There was a bridge over that river, and it was thought that if the bridge were to be destroyed the whole area would be liberated. They were using hand grenades against the well-built bridge, but to no avail. All the guerillas were doing was using up their supply of hand grenades. That was when Colonel Rai wrote, "This is not feasible. There is no advantage to my staying here. Nothing will work if India does not help. They are not even

able to bring down a bridge." That was the situation, and later, of course, India itself got involved with its army.

In the middle of all this, in order to encourage the Bangladeshis and make them feel that they had support, Jayaprakashji organised a conference in Delhi. I also attended that conference and spoke before it. Western countries were not supportive, however. With the Indian Army going in, there was a feeling that this was a case of external intervention. There was also a difference of opinion among the socialist parties. I do not know what decision they made collectively as socialists, but individually there were differences. Some were saying that this was a case of intervention in the affairs of another state.

I should clarify my point of view on this matter. Even today, there is discussion about that period as well as my role in it. Some people prefer to equate the Indian entry into Bangladesh with the Russian intervention in Afghanistan. But the Pakistani army itself was an occupying force in East Bengal. If anyone fights against the Russian occupation of Afghanistan, I will support that force. This cannot be termed external intervention. It was General Niazi's one lakh soldiers in Bangladesh that was an occupying force, in my opinion. This was not only an 'internal affair', and later events proved the point.

Even though India entered Bangladesh in a manner reminiscent of events in the Second World War, we must remember that it was out of there within three months. The Russian army, on the other hand, is not making any move even today to leave Afghanistan. It has become an occupying force. In the same manner, Pakistan would have been termed an occupying power if it had maintained its army in the territory of Bangladesh—a different state—if it had wanted to continue fighting, and if it had not evacuated its soldiers. But Bangladesh gained recognition as an independent state, and no occupying army stayed on there. That is not the case in Afghanistan, where the Russian invasion has wrested independence from the country. Thus, our support for the Bangladeshi fight for independence was against an occupying power. There is a basic difference between that case and that of Afghanistan.

I have two separate points of view on this matter. One is that it is appropriate to provide international support to reinstate the democratic rights of the people. One might debate the appropriateness of the support provided, but that is another matter. Speaking as a matter of principle, the formal status of an authoritarian government holds no relevance. The same force which was used against Pakistan's authoritarian presence cannot be used against a democratic system. I use two separate standards

for this. Further, I also maintained that there is a basic difference between the nature of the Indian armed forces and that of the Pakistani military. The Russian army remains in Afghanistan today. Bangladesh had all the characteristics of a state and was seeking independence. In the end, history itself established the fact that it was an independent state.

It was because of these beliefs and understandings that I helped the Bangladeshi fighters at that time. Our arms were transferred into their hands. Bangladesh became independent. However, India managed to exert such control over them that they were able to thank me only in secret. They never did acknowledge our support publicly. Jayaprakashji's friends and others told the Bangladeshis that they should invite him over to show gratitude, but they did not do so. Instead, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman sent a message, "I am finding it difficult to do that, because my relations with Indira Gandhi will suffer." He had become completely subservient by then. For this reason, I do not have much respect for Mujibur Rahman. I have met many others from his upper ranks, and he would send private messages to me saying, "I am thankful." He sent an emissary to Jayaprakashji and to me, a man named Malik, who later became Bangladesh's ambassador to India.

Having extended our support to the Bengali fighters, I was now faced with some difficulties. All my weapons were gone. I had thought that this was a small investment, but there was no result to show for it: we did not get the weapons replaced, nor did we get payment. It was a complete fiasco.

Now I had no money. Then the idea of a hijacking came up. Shall I tell you about that in detail? Or shall we stop here? Let's leave it for now. People have started arriving...

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